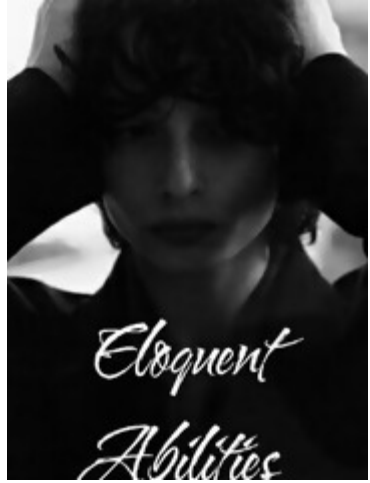
Eloquent
Abilities

Eloquent Abilities by BCI603

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Summary: It's quiet now, not a sound to be heard, not even the crunching of snow underneath a person's feet. Snow began falling again, even heavier now, covering up the tracks that had once been there. And Michael Wheeler was gone... Rated T for language!

1. Chapter 1

Before this story begins, I just wanted to explain a few things;

This story is in no way, shape or form related to *Home* (it's not a sequel or anything like that), one of my other stories. It does, in fact, have a few similarities such as; Ted has left his family to be with another woman he had two kids with, while married to Karen with their three children, Karen is dating a lawyer named Bryan, the kids are 14, going on 15 but El is only 14, the Wheeler's have a dog named Rosie, they're all freshmen in high school, including El and anything else that doesn't relate to the actual show is from *Home*. Anyways, I'm gonna shut up now and hope that you guys enjoy this first chapter!

Thursday, November 7, 1985

"Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!" Everyone sang to El as she blew out the candles on her cake. It's technically her 14th birthday, but it's the first party she's ever had. The boys and Max had gone all out, decorating just about the entirety of the Wheeler house. There were balloons floating everywhere, streamers hung all over the place, and confetti in both her and Mike's hair from where Dustin threw it at them when they kissed just moments ago. They'd ordered pizza and danced and talked until it was all gone. The Byers, Bryan, and Steve were there as well. Everyone cheered once the candles were out and Mike began plucking them off the cake, not even reacting to the heat on the end of each candle. He put them on the table.

"Who's ready for some cake and ice cream, and then presents?" Karen asked, smiling at the excitement coming from the teens. She and Joyce began cutting the cake and scooping ice cream onto plates and handing them out. El was thrilled to have gotten the biggest piece, and immediately began shoveling it into her mouth. Mike laughed at that and joined in.

"So, how's high school treating you little dipshits?" Stevie asked, sitting on the couch with his feet on the coffee table once everyone had finished their cake and ice cream.

"Hey! We're not little dipshits!" Lucas exclaimed.

"We're big dipshits now." Dustin said grinning stupidly, making everyone laugh.

"Yeah, Steve, Mike is almost the same height as you now." Nancy joked. He raised an eyebrow and stood up.

"Stand up, shithead."

"Can you not?" Mike asked, rolling his eyes while the boys giggled. He stood up like he was asked, a smug grin forming on his face as he crossed his arms and stood next to Steve. Steve's eyes widened at the fact that this 15 year old is as almost tall as him now.

"How tall are you?"

"Like 5'6 or 5'7 I think." Mike replied.

"That's so not fair, how the hell are you as almost tall as me now? I'm 5'11." He pouted and plopped back on the couch. Mike rolled his eyes and shrugged, sitting back down beside El and putting an arm around her.

"You know, I never asked, but where'd the shiner come from, Will?" Bryan asked. Will gently touched his eye, a blush forming on his cheek.

"Troy." Dustin piped up before Will could speak.

"What? You said that you got hit with a ball in gym!" Joyce exclaimed.

"I did!" He said. "Troy just happened to aim it right at my face."

"And Mike might or might not have given Troy a better one." Lucas said, grinning from ear to ear.

"Really now?" Karen raised an eyebrow at her son, who's cheeks turned pink as he said,

"Let's stop talking about us and about El, huh? I mean this is her first

birthday after all." Karen gave him the *I'm watching you* look as everyone laughed. El giggled and kissed his cheek. Everyone handed her presents, and she got some makeup from Karen and Nancy, some comic books from Lucas and Dustin, crayons and paper from Will, a hat from Max, some shirts and a new charm from Hopper, a few dresses from Joyce, and a pair of shoes from Steve, who'd overheard her talking about wanting them. Mike didn't give her a present with everyone else, so she assumed he didn't get her one. That is, until he grabbed her hand and took her into the kitchen, grabbing their jackets in the process, and took her out into the back yard.

"I, um, I wanted to give it to you privately." He said, scratching the back of his neck nervously as he handed her a square box. She smiled at him widely and ripped the wrapping paper off. She opened it and inside were gorgeous diamond earrings, some that she saw at the jewelry store and wanted. Her smile grew wider and she looked up at him.

"I love it."

"Really?" He asked. She nodded. She started to give him a hug but he held up a finger and handed her another box, and this one was rectangular. She raised an eyebrow and he smiled. She opened it and it was a tape that said *I Can't Help Falling in Love With You* in Mike's messy handwriting. "I recorded that for you, um, a couple days ago."

"Is it you singing?" She asked. He nodded, his cheeks turning red.

"Yeah, I uh, you talked about how much you loved it when I sang it to you a couple months ago, and Max suggested I record it for you, so I did." He shrugged. "You can play it anytime you want." She tackled him in a hug, almost knocking him down.

"I love it. I can't wait to play it when I get home. And I love the earrings." He smiled, hugging her back just as tightly.

"Good, I'm glad."

After another hour or so of festivities, El declared that today was the best day she'd ever had, and was the last to leave the Wheeler's residence.

"Thank you for today, Mike." She said, hugging him tightly.

"You're welcome, El. I'm glad you had a good first birthday." She smiled and stood on her toes to kiss him on the lips. He kissed her back and when she pulled away, he said, "I love you El."

"I love you too, Mikey." She pecked his cheek and waved to Karen, Nancy, and Holly as she got into the truck with Hopper. She and Mike waved at each other until they were out of sight and Mike went back inside with his mom and sisters. He went to bed soon after El and Hopper left, and when the two got home, El immediately got ready for bed and fell asleep listening to the tape Mike gave her.

It was about four in the morning when Rosie woke Mike up so he'd take her outside. He groaned and got up, putting his shoes and jacket on. He put his hat on and tiredly walked downstairs and let her out, standing on the porch. After she did her business, she started barking at a spot near the side of the house.

"Rosie! Stop, people are sleeping!" He exclaimed quietly. She looked at him, barked one more time, and ran up to him. He heard a sound coming from the side of the house but figured it was just a stray cat and opened the door and let Rosie in. Just as he was about to take a step inside, he heard rapid footsteps approaching and before he could even look behind him, someone covered his mouth and nose with a cloth and everything went black.

It's quiet now, not a sound to be heard, not even the crunching of snow underneath a person's feet. Snow began falling again, even heavier now, covering up the tracks that had once been there. And Michael Wheeler was gone, the only trace of him is his hat, lying on the ground right in front of the door.

2. Chapter 2

Friday, November 8, 1985

"Michael! Time to get up for school!" Karen called, walking towards his room. Nancy was already awake and getting ready, and usually, Mike was rushing to get ready and leave so he could see El, but she hadn't seen him once. She looked in his room and saw that he hadn't made his bed, which he did every morning. His blanket was halfway on the floor, and his shoes weren't by the door. "Hey Nancy?"

"Yeah?"

"Have you seen Michael yet today?"

"No ma'am!" She called back. She saw his book bag next to his closet, so he hasn't gone to school early. Plus he would have woken her up. She went downstairs, expecting him to be at the table, but instead saw the door slightly cracked and Rosie whining and scratching at it. "Rosie? What's wrong girl?" She scratched her head and opened the door to see if anything was out there, and there was. Mike's hat was on the ground, right at her feet. His *favorite* hat.

"Nancy!" She yelled in a slightly panicked voice. "Come here please!"

"What's wrong, mom?" She asked, walking into the kitchen as Karen picked the hat up.

"Something's not right." She said.

"What do you mean?"

"Mike didn't make his bed, his shoes aren't by his door, and his book bag is in his room. And this is his favorite hat, he wouldn't just leave it outside like that."

"He probably went to school and forgot his book bag in a rush." Nancy said, attempting to ease her mother's worries. Karen shook her head.

"The door was cracked, Nancy. And Rosie was scratching at it. You

know she wakes Mike up to take her out at night. Go look in the garage and see if his bike is out there. I'm gonna call Hopper."

"Mom, I doubt it's that serious-"

"Nancy, after everything that's happened in the last two years, right around this time, you can't be too careful." Nancy sighed, nodding in agreement and went to the garage to check. His bike was still there, and Mike was no where to be seen.

"It's in there mom!" She called, shutting the garage door and going back into the kitchen.

"Hey, Hop, it's Karen."

"Hey, Karen, what's up?"

"We can't find Mike." She told him straight up.

"What do you mean you can't find him?"

"He's nowhere to be found. His shoes are gone, and so is his jacket."

"You sure he didn't just head to school early?"

"I'm sure, Hop. His book bag is still in his room and his bike is in the garage."

"Okay, try not to worry too much, Karen. I'm sure he's just out for a jog or something. He told me he's done it a couple times before. I'm going to take El to school and then I'll drop by your house and if he's not back by then, then I'll go out looking for him, okay?"

"Okay, thanks, Hop."

"Don't mention it." The line went dead and Karen sighed. There was a knock on the door and Karen rushed to open it, but it was just Dustin and Lucas.

"Hi Mrs. Wheeler. Where's Mike? We've been waiting on him." Lucas said. She bit her lip.

"He, um, he's not feeling well so he's staying home today." She lied.

"Oh, okay. Tell him we hope he feels better." Dustin said, giving her a wide smile. She waved at them as they sped down the road to get Max.

"What did Hopper say, mom?" Nancy asked.

"He said that Mike's probably going on a jog or something, but if he did then he'd be back by now."

"Since when did Mike even jog?" Karen shrugged. "Do you want me to go ride around a little bit and see if he's out there?"

"No, well, yeah, just don't take too long. I'm going to call Bryan." Nancy nodded and left quickly.

"What are we going to do with the boy, Brandon?" A tall, burly man asked.

"I don't think Evans knows yet, Taylor, how am I supposed to know." Brandon, significantly shorter but just as burly, whispered harshly to him. The two looked into the room one last time, the boy, Mike, laying on the tiny cot in the corner, unconscious, and shut the door, locking it.

"Brandon! Taylor! Get in here." A deep voice yelled harshly from the end of the hall, where a door was wide open.

"Yes sir?" They asked in unison.

"Take a seat." Evans said. They sat in the seats on the opposite side of the table. "I'll tell you exactly what you're going to do. You're going to interrogate him when he wakes up. Do anything and everything to get information out of him."

"Information on what, exactly?"

"Experiment 011."

"What exactly did happened when you got up this morning?" Hopper asked, excepting the coffee Karen offered him.

"Mike is usually up before us, every morning, and I went to see if he was up and his bed wasn't made. He always makes it up. His shoes and jacket weren't where they're supposed to be, and his book bag is still in his room."

"And you said his bike is still in the garage?" He asked Nancy, who nodded. She'd gotten back from driving around the neighborhood a few minutes before he arrived.

"The back door was cracked and Rosie was scratching at it and whining."

"Did you see foot prints in the snow at all?" She shook her head and then held up Mike's hat. It was the one Hopper got him for Christmas last year, his favorite one.

"It was laying on the doorstep." She said, biting her lip nervously. He stood up and walked over to the door, opening it and going outside. He looked around the back of the house for about ten minutes, until he found something, something so hidden he was surprised he saw it. He picked it up on the corner with his finger tips and went back in.

"I know I'm not crazy, Hop. You of all people know Mike wouldn't just run off like that." Karen said tearfully. He held up what was in his hand.

"Have you ever seen this rag before?" Karen shook her head immediately.

"All of the ones we have, have a design on it. No plain colors." She replied. He waved his hand underneath it, wafting it towards him, and there was a faint smell, one that he'd been praying wasn't there.

"Mike definitely didn't run off. He was taken."

3. Chapter 3

12:30 PM

"Will Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers, Jane Hopper, Maxine Mayfield and Dustin Henderson come to the office?" The five looked at each other, they had the same class, "And bring your things." They rushed to get up, praying nothing was wrong, and almost ran to the office, where Hopper was waiting.

"Chief?" Will asked, confused.

"Come with me, kids. Your parents know I'm picking you up." He said, walking out the door, motioning for them to follow him.

"What's going on, dad?" El asked.

"I'll tell you when we get to where we're going." He responded, opening the passenger door and moving the seat up so the boys and Max could get in the back. He moved it back for El and almost ran to the drivers side.

"Where *are* we going?" Dustin asked, but Hopper said nothing. They all started asking questions when they saw two other police cars in the driveway of Mike's house, plus Bryan and Joyce's cars

"What the fuc-"

"Dustin!" Lucas punched him in the arm. Hopper rolled his eyes, at this point not caring about the swearing, because honestly he wanted to join in on it.

"Is Mike okay? What's going on? Dad tell me!" El demanded, freaking out.

"Just wait until we get inside, okay?" He said, and swiftly got out of the truck with the five teens following him. Powell and Callahan were sitting at across the table from Nancy and Karen, Joyce and Bryan sitting on either end. They were asking questions that neither of them could really answer.

"I thought Mike was sick?" Dustin asked, confused. Karen looked at him, tears threatening to fall. She shook her head.

"I didn't want you to worry. He was taken." She whispered the last part.

"Taken? By who?" El asked, looking between Hopper's face and Karen's.

"We don't know yet." Powell said. "Which is why we want to ask you four some questions."

"Have a seat on the couch." Hopper said, ushering them into the living room, where they did as he asked.

"What was the last thing Mike said to you guys last night? Do you remember?" Callahan asked.

"I, uh... All he really said to me was thank you." Max said. "Because I gave him the idea of recording a song for El and... and she loved it and he thanked me."

"We were wrestling before I left so we really didn't talk, just cursed at each other." Dustin said.

"I just told him bye," Lucas said, "He seemed happy still, nothing out of the ordinary."

"Same as Lucas." Will said.

"He said he loved me." El said, biting her lip. It was quiet for a minute or two, and Lucas said,

"I saw him last night, well, this morning, really. I woke up to use the bathroom and looked outside and saw him with Rosie. She was barking a lot and then he let her back inside and went in himself. I didn't see him go all the way inside, I went back to bed." His leg started shaking.

"What time was this?"

"About four, I think?"

"That's usually the time he takes her outside." Karen whispered.

"Was there any evidence or anything outside?" Will asked.

"Mike's hat was on the door step and the door was cracked this morning." Nancy said, biting her nails nervously.

"And I found a rag out in the snow with some sort of substance on it." Hopper said.

"Like something to knock you out?" Dustin asked. Hopper hesitated, but nodded.

"God, I should have kept looking to make sure he went inside." Lucas stated, leaning forward on his knees and covering his face.

"Lucas-" Karen started

"Mike is gone because I was too worried about going back to sleep. I should have got his attention or something." He said, shaking his head at himself. "I could have stopped whatever happened, Mrs. Wheeler." He said harshly. She pursed her lips and gave him a stern look.

"Lucas, it is not your fault." She said. "How do you know you could have stopped it? They probably would have gotten you too." He laughed humorlessly.

"I honestly don't care if they had gotten me too, then I'd know if he was okay."

"Then we'd have two kids to worry about." Hopper said. "Look, kid, I know you're worried, we all are, trust me. We're going to find him." Hopper looked to Powell and Callahan and gave them instructions as to what to do and they left. During all this, El had her eyes closed, attempting to reach Mike.

Mike? Are you there? Please respond. Nothing. She continued trying until she felt eyes on her. She opened her eyes, the tears she'd been holding in falling down her cheeks.

"Are you okay, Sweetie?" Joyce asked, crouching down in front of

her. El shook her head and sniffed.

"I tried to talk to him."

"Talk to him? Huh?" Max asked, confused. El then realized that none of them knew about the connection she and Mike had.

"W-we can talk to each other. In our minds." She said. "I can talk to him and he can talk to me."

"You mean like telepathy?" Dustin asked. El nodded.

"He always answers. Always. And he didn't. I can feel what he feels. And he can feel what I'm feeling. It's not strong, but we know what each other's feeling."

"That...That's crazy! But in a good way." Dustin added.

"How come you didn't tell any of us?" Joyce asked gently.

"I wanted it to just be between us." She said. "Can't do it with no one else."

"Have you tried?" She nodded.

"It didn't work." She punched the couch cushions. "I don't understand! Who would do this?" She exclaimed, the tears she'd been holding in finally falling. Joyce pulled her in for a hug, and El hugged her back tightly. Hopper crouched next to Joyce and squeezed El's shoulder gently and looked at everyone else.

"We're going to find him. I promise."

4. Chapter 4

When Mike woke up, his head felt like it was gonna explode. Looking around, his vision blurry, he noticed he was in a small, grey room, with no windows. Only a door with a small opening in the middle. He blinked a couple times, his vision clearing. He was almost as long as the bed he was on, he's feet just about hanging off it. He was still in his pajamas, but his jacket and shoes were no where to be found.

"What the hell?" He mumbled to himself. It was silent, and he couldn't stand it. He laid in the same position for what felt like hours, not knowing what to do. That is, until he heard voices at the door. He shot up, backing as far away from the door as possible, into the corner. He brought his legs up to his chest as the door opened and two men walked in. His breathing quickened, his eyes widening. "W-Who are you?"

"None of your concern." Taylor said gruffly, crossing his arms.

"We want to ask you a couple of questions, kid. And we want you to answer them *correctly*." Brandon said, menacingly. With sudden confidence, Mike said,

"And if I don't?"

"Then you'll be wishing you were *never* born."

"We want to help find him." Will said finally. Everyone in the room had been silent for the last fifteen minutes.

"You can't stop us this time." Dustin said, confident.

"And we won't." Hopper said. "But if I tell you not to do something or go somewhere, you *better* not." The three boys nodded. "As of right now, Callahan and Powell are typing up a missing child report and there will be a meeting at town square later tonight and we'll be gathering a search party. We're going to start searching immediately, and you can come with us, only if you promise to stay with an adult at all times, got it?" They nodded once again, and he turned to El,

who nodded immediately. "Good. I'm just as scared as you all are," He said, looking at everyone in the room, "I know I give Mike a hard time but you can't help but love the kid." Just then, Steve and Jonathan burst into the house.

"What the hell?" Bryan exclaimed.

'What are you two doing here?" Joyce asked, looking at Jonathan specifically.

"We had early dismissal today." He replied. "Steve picked me up."

"What the hell is going on? And where's Little Wheeler?" Steve asked, noticing he was nowhere to be found. Fresh tears began falling down Karen's face at the mention of him, and Nancy hugged her tightly. Hopper sighed and said,

"He's missi-"

"He's been taken." El interrupted. Hopper looked at her. Her eyes were red and swollen. "It's the truth." He sighed and nodded.

"He was taken sometime between four and five this morning." Hopper said.

"And how do you know this?" Steve demanded. Hopper stood and pulled both teens out the front door.

"Look, you can't just bust up in someones house like that, Harrington." Hopper started, "One, it's disrespectful, and two-" Steve didn't let him finish.

"What are you going to do about Mike?" Jonathan nudged him, silently telling him to shut up.

"Look, shut up and I'll tell you." With a glare, Steve closed his mouth and let Hopper explain everything to them.

"Why exactly are we going to search the woods when we know he was taken? Literally kidnapped. I doubt he'd be out in the woods." Jonathan asked, this time being the irritated one.

"Look, I'm tired of you two and your attitudes, now tone it the hell down or leave, got it?" They rolled their eyes and nodded. "Mike's a smart kid, he could have escaped, they could have just dumped him somewhere in the woods and he got lost, there's a possibility of anything and everything."

"Do you think he was taken to the upside down?" Jonathan asked.

"No, the gate's closed, and El would know if it was reopened." Hopper replied.

"What about the government? Or the lab?" Steve asked. "Do you think it could have been them?"

"I won't rule it out, but the labs been closed for a year, so I highly doubt it. But, I will make a few calls and see what I can do about getting in there."

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7 PM

"Mike!"

"Michael!"

"Wheeler!"

There were over 50 people out walking in the woods, yelling Mike's name. They'd already explored the woods around Mike's house, Dustin's, even the Byers house. Now, they were searching the woods around the quarry, thankful that there was no sign of him *in* the quarry itself.

"What if we never find him?" Nancy asked, fearfully. Jonathan, who she'd been walking with, stopped and pulled her into a hug.

"We'll find him, Nancy, or he'll find us. Like Hopper said, he's a smart kid."

"I know he is, but... Who knows what they could be doing to him? They could be torturing him, for *no* reason!" He sighed, rubbing her back.

"Let's just focus on the positives, alright?" She nodded into his shoulder. "Hey," She looked at him and he wiped the tears from her cheeks, "Will was found, wasn't he?"

"Yeah but..."

"I know, and he's okay now. Mike will be fine."

What they didn't know, was that Nancy's thought were very similar to what was actually happening to Mike.

5. Chapter 5

Friday, November 15, 1985

It's been a week. A week since Mike went missing. There hasn't been any more evidence as to what happened that morning, other than the fact that Mike was knocked out and taken from his back door step. There is once again a six o'clock curfew, just like the one in 1983. Karen and Nancy are a mess, Holly isn't exactly sure of what's going on, and no one has heard from Ted, so he probably doesn't even know. The search party have searched just about every inch of Hawkins *twice* already, and plan to go even further out in the investigation. Everyone in the party are on edge, and El absolutely refused to go to school, which Hopper didn't exactly blame her for. She listened to the tape that Mike gave her every night, so many times it was hard to count. Nancy didn't go to school either, intent on joining Hopper, Callahan, and Powell on their morning searches.

That afternoon, as the party were getting their bikes from the bike rack, the snobby, annoying voice of Troy was heard.

"Why would anyone want to kidnap frog face? I mean, he's so damn annoying it's ridiculous. They're probably torturing him because of how much of a wimp he is." He said, laughing with James.

"They're probably gonna dump him at the quarry or something."

"Do you two ever know how to shut the fuck up?" Dustin asked, glaring at them.

"Oh, did you say something? I can't hear you over your pitiful little cries for your frog lookin' ass friend."

"Do you have any idea how stupid you sound? And how much of a horrible human being you are?" Lucas piped up.

"Mike isn't a wimp." Will said, confidently. "He jumped off a cliff for his friend."

"Yeah, because he was scared of me." Troy said as if it was obvious.

"Ha! You actually think you're scary?" Max asked, crossing her arms. "Because a grasshopper is scarier than you." Troy rolled his eyes.

"Mike actually care's about his friends, that's why he did it." Dustin said. "I bet ol' James here wouldn't jump off a cliff for you, now would he? And you wouldn't jump off one for him either." That sentence is what started an argument between the two bullies, giving the party a chance to leave somewhat peacefully, instead of rushing to get away from the two.

"I hate them so fucking much." Max huffed, gripping Lucas' jacket tightly.

"At least you haven't had to deal with them as long as we have." Dustin said.

"Not the point." She rolled her eyes and he glared at her. The rest of the bike ride was quiet, their hope quickly vanishing when they didn't see Hopper's truck in the drive way of the Wheeler's. Instead, it was Joyce's car. Everyday this week, they stopped by to check on them and see if there was anymore information.

"Nothing." Nancy said, running a hand through her hair. "No trace of him anywhere. He just... vanished into thin air." Noticing the fallen faces, she asked, "How was school today? Anything interesting?"

"Nope." Will shook his head.

"Just everyone whispering about Mike and looking at us like we're Aliens." Lucas said.

"And Troy decided to start talking shit, finally." Dustin said, about to tell her exactly what was said, but decided against it.

"Troy can go to hell." She said, shaking her head. "He's headed straight there if he keeps it up." They nodded in agreement. "Has anyone talked or seen El this week?" She asked. They shook their heads.

"She hasn't been to school either."

"I know, I figured you guys would have seen her."

"She doesn't want to see or talk to anyone." Will told her.

"Hopper said the other day that all she's done is listen to the tape Mike gave her." Lucas said.

"The one of him singing?" Nancy asked. Dustin almost said *duh* but now isn't the time for that. They nodded. They heard a door slam and moments later, Hopper walked inside. Everyone immediately began asking questions, and he had to yell at them to shut up.

"Everyone just shut up and let me talk!" He exclaimed, and everyone stopped talking. "Just...Just sit down and be quiet." Everyone did so, and Joyce and Karen walked in from the kitchen to join them. The kids sat on the floor while the adults sat on the furniture.

"First, have you heard anything from Ted?" Hopper asked Karen, who shook her head.

"Not a word." She told him. Hopper rolled his eyes, resisting the urge to curse.

"Well, that doesn't surprise me." He said, finally. "Anyways, I've talked to Dr. Owens."

"And?"

"And he's going to gather up a team and we're gonna go search the lab."

"Can we-" Dustin started.

"No!" Hopper, Joyce, Karen, and Nancy yelled in unison.

"No one in this house, other than me, are going in that lab. Not again." Hopper almost growled. "It's too dangerous."

"But what if Mike is in there? What if he's hurt?" Lucas demanded.

"There are a lot of *what if's* to be said, kid. What if you kids go in there with me and don't come out alive? What if I have to tell your parents you're gone? Actually gone, and will *never* come back."

"What are you trying to say?" Will asked, eyebrows raised. "Are you trying to say that you'll come back without Mike?"

"Are you *trying to say* that Mike is dead?" Max asked, eyes narrowed.

"Don't put words in my mouth. That's not at all what I'm saying. I don't believe Mike is gone. If everything El has told me is true-"

"What has El told you?" Karen asked.

"That's not the-"

"That's not the point my ass." She hissed. "What has she told you?"

6. Chapter 6

Hopper sighed, pinching the bridge of his nose and sitting back against the couch.

"She told me that she would know if he...If he died."

"How does she know that?" Nancy asked.

"It has to do with the connection they have." He told her. "The connection would be broken and she would feel it. And he'd feel it if she was to...die." No one said anything for a few minutes.

"When are you going to search the lab?" Max asked, finally.

"It's going to be a while." He responded. "We have to gather *a lot* of people, just in case they're there, because they'll have weapons."

"How long?" Joyce asked.

"Hard to say. It could be a week to a month-"

"A month?" Karen exclaimed. "If he's in there, they could be torturing him! They could kill him in the span of a month!"

"I know! It's not me, okay? It's Owen's call, not mine."

"That makes a lot of sense. I bet he's just trying to cover up for them." Dustin grumbled.

"You're chief of police, you should have a say in the matter." Karen stated.

"And he is apart of the government in one way or another. I'd rather him gather people with protection and weapons than just a couple people from here and go in and get killed."

"This is such bull shit." Max mumbled, but no one except Lucas heard who. He nudged her and gave her a slight nod in agreement. Once again, it was quiet.

"Why don't you bring El over?" Karen offered. He looked at her. "I'm sure she's miserable by herself." Hopper nodded.

"I'll talk to her. She's hardly come out of her room. I'm surprised she hasn't broken every window again."

"Wait, what?" Everyone looked at him again.

"Again?" Nancy asked, surprised.

"Uh, yeah, it happened last year. A bit of a temper tantrum because I wouldn't let her see Mike." He sighed, rubbing his eyes. "I really wish I'd have let her."

"You just wanted to protect her, Hop, and you did. She's going to school,and she has a normal, well, as normal as it can get, life." Joyce said, patting his knee. She stood up, "Now, who'd like some hot chocolate?"

One week later

It's been almost two weeks since Mike's disappearance, and Dr. Owens hasn't let Hopper know anything. Hopper literally can *not* go and search the lab himself, which he desperately wanted to do. When he'd told Karen that there have been no plans made, she freaked out on him, screaming at him that he didn't care about Mike and that he wasn't trying hard enough. She made him leave the house, in which Nancy apologized for multiple times, and as did Karen, eventually.

El went to school Monday and Tuesday, before Thanksgiving break, only because Hopper told her that Mike would want her too. And she had a couple of tests she couldn't afford to miss. She was miserable, she's even gone as far as begging Hopper and Karen to let her stay at the Wheeler's so she could sleep in Mike's bed for some sort of comfort. He's let her stay once, but he knew that he'd let her stay even more as time went on.

Thanksgiving passed, and everyone was quiet. No one really said anything. Joyce, Will, and Jonathan came over to help Karen cook dinner, in hopes of either cheering her up or getting her mind off it.

The rest of the party would join after their own lunches or dinners with family. Bryan was there, as well as Steve, who insisted he come and help. The empty chair at the table caused many tears to pour, many sobs to be heard, and many, many angry voices that could be heard from outside, where El was arguing with Hopper, begging him to let her stay the night.

And he did. He let her stay that night. Every week, he let her stay a night or two.

It's been a month since Mike dissapeared. The party got together everyday and visited with Karen, Nancy and Holly. Nancy was back in school, trying desperately to catch up on what she's missed. Troy and James were still talking crap about Mike, resulting in many fights between the two and the party, causing multiple detentions and suspensions. There have been search parties, multiple, out searching throughout about half of Indiana. There's still been no word from Dr. Owens, so they did the only thing they could do. Continue to search on their own.

One day, Joyce and Karen got into an argument. Well, really just Karen yelling at Joyce.

"I understand what you're going through, Karen." Joyce had told her, and that's when the yelling began.

"No, you don't." She hissed. "You don't know what it's like. Yeah, Will went missing two years ago, for a week. Mike has been gone month. A month! You don't know what's going on inside my head. You don't know how hard it is to sleep at night, knowing your little boy is out there some where. For a month. He could be out in the cold freezing to death. He could be starving. He could be in that lab. Whoever took him could be torturing him. He could be dead, or dying right now, and I can't do anything to stop it." She broke down in tears, almost thankful it was just the two of them. Joyce immediately hugged her.

"You're right, I don't know what it's like for him to be gone a month. But I know how you're feeling. That's how I felt that week Will was gone. The what if's, the could be's, anything. You have to stay strong, Karen. Stay strong for Nancy and Holly. I shouldn't say anything

about being strong, because I sure wasn't." She chuckled lightly. "But Mike would want you to be strong." Karen nodded, pulling away and wiping her tears away.

"He would, wouldn't he?"

7. Chapter 7

Monday, December 23, 1985

Mike has been missing for one month and a little over two weeks. Forty six days. It's his 15th birthday no one laughed, no one cried, no one really spoke. Everyone would gather at the Wheeler's home to halfheartedly celebrate, in honor of Mike, but then? That's when the tears would start, once again.

Everyday, they'd take him to the interrogation room.

Everyday, it was the same two men.

Everyday, with every question asked, every answer unwanted, and every question gone unanswered, Mike was beaten.

Everyday, he'd be thrown back into his room.

He was fed, twice a day.

Everyday, he'd grow weaker.

"You're going to answer us one of these days, kid. You might as well go ahead and give up." Brandon said, gripping Mike's arm tightly. He pushed him into the chair, and Taylor tied his wrists and ankles to it.

"Where is the girl?"

"I already told you-" Brandon punched him.

"I don't care what you *already* told me. I want the truth."

"It's the truth." He was punched again. "I swear it is!"

"You're lying." Taylor spat.

"I watched her die."

"Impossible."

After the usual round of questions and beatings, Taylor roughly grabbed Mike's wrists, untying them while Brandon untied his ankles. Grabbing his arm again, Brandon yanked him up harshly and Taylor grabbed his other arm. As they basically dragged him down the very familiar hall way, he couldn't help but focus on the grips they had on him. He had bruises up and down his arms, just from how hard their grips were. He's gotten used to the pain there, but it didn't stop the absolute hate and anger he had.

All of a sudden, the two men let him go, both yelling and rushing to take their lab coats off. Mike fell to the ground, feeling blood trickle from his nose. He felt even weaker, unsure of what just happened. He looked up at them, his vision slowly fading, to see their lab coats on fire as they stomped on them, attempting to put out the blazing lab coats.

"What the fuck?" Brandon yelled, kicking the lab coat across the hall.

"How in God's name did that happen?" Taylor exclaimed, his face red and eyes wide. He looked at the kid, unconscious on the ground, blood coming out of his nose. "Do you think...?" He asked, trailing off as he looked at Brandon, who has the same look on his face.

"The kid's got powers."

"So what you're saying is, the kid set your sleeves on fire?" Evans asked, crossing his arms and looking at the two men, who nodded immediately. "How is that possible?

"He's got powers, like Experiment 011. It's the only reasonable explanation."

"What happened exactly, then?"

"We were taking him back to his cell." Taylor began,

"And out of no where, both of our sleeves were on fire and we let him go." Brandon continued,

"His nose was bleeding, and he passed out." Taylor finished.

"Well, I want to view the tapes." Evans said, looking at them.

"What tapes?" Taylor asked stupidly.

"Video tapes, idiot!" Brandon exclaimed, rolling his eyes. "Not to be disrespectful, Sir, but do you not believe us?"

"I do believe you, I just want to see it for myself."

The Wheeler's

"Hey, Sweetie." Karen said gently, as she pulled El into a tight hug. She looked at Hopper, who gave her a sad smile. They were the last to arrive at the memorial like celebration. Where the Christmas tree would usually be, there stood a table with the most recent picture of Mike on it. His year book picture, he had the biggest smile on his face, his hair almost covering his eyes. There were many other pictures sitting around it, some of just Mike, some of Mike and El, and many were of Mike and the whole party, along with a few of him with his family.

"This memorial does *not* represent death." Dustin stated in almost a whisper. "It's a memorial in celebration of his life, of being the big one five. It's a birthday party, he's just not present." He spoke to everyone in the room, his voice wavering.

"Just imagine how mad at us he'd be about this." Max attempted to joke, and a few gave halfhearted chuckles.

"Mike isn't dead." Will stated. Everyone looked at him. "We all know he isn't. He's just not here. He's some place, hopefully safe." They nodded in agreement. They told stories about the fun times they had with Mike, all the bad times, all the times he stood up to them, and no matter how bad Dustin wanted to talk about it, he refrained from telling them about the cliff incident.

"Guys...Can we just...stop talking about him like this?" Lucas asked. Everyone looked at him. "I feel like I'm at someones house after a funeral, talking about all the good times and bad times I had with the person that died, and I hate it. I just want to forget." His eyes started

watering. "I just want to forget that one of my best friends is out there, possibly dying, and we can't do a damn thing about it. I want to forget." He whispered the last part, and Karen pulled him in for a hug, her own tears falling, which brought on a chain reaction. Everyone was in tears, even Hopper, who stood back, where no one could see him. The group hug that had formed ended as soon as the phone began blaring. Karen looked at Hopper, who looked at them. He answered it immediately.

"Hello? Yes, this is he." He stayed on the phone for a few minutes, his eyes widening with almost every word. "Hell yes, thank you. I'll see you then." He hung up and looked at them.

"That was Owens." He stated. "We're going next week."

8. Chapter 8

"You want me to do what exactly?" A woman asked. She was currently tied to a chair in the interrogation room. Evans rolled his eyes and Brandon scoffed.

"You will hide all of us. Everything that those who are coming to see." He said. "They are coming to search here, next week, and the boy will not be found."

"What makes you think I'm capable of doing so?"

"Did you really think there was only one copy of your files? I know what ability you have. Everyone in this building is aware."

"Okay." She stated, "And why should I help you? You ruined my childhood. I've had to run my entire life."

"I can promise you will not be bothered again." Evans said, tapping his foot. She raised an eyebrow. "You'll be given a home. A real home, a job, money, anything you want."

"Anything I want?"

"Anything. As long as you do what I say, when I say it."

"What's the catch?"

"There is no catch." He shook his head, chuckling.

"Sure there isn't."

"Experiment 011." He said. "You do this for us, and she will be left alone." Her eyes widened at the mention of her. "We will stop searching for her. She can have a normal life too. With you."

"You're not telling me the whole truth." She narrowed her eyes at him. He stared at her for a moment.

"Fine," He crossed his legs, sitting back in his chair. "We've come across another experiment. One like no other."

"How?"

"In an attempt to get information out of him for Experiment 011, we've discovered he has the ability to produce fire."

"Fire?"

"Is that not what I just said?" She glared at him.

"How do you know?"

"He set our lab coats on fire." Taylor spoke up. She looked at him.

"I want you to train him." Evans said, bringing her attention back to him.

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me, damn it. Stop acting like you didn't." He growled. "If you don't train him, if you don't test his abilities, you will be stuck here. Experiment 011 will be found and possibly killed." He stared at her as the angry look on her face slowly fell. "Now, do we have a deal, Experiment-"

"Do *not* call me that." She growled. "My name is Kali, and you have a deal."

It was a couple hours later when Mike woke up. It was still the same day, his birthday. No, he didn't forget. He's counted the days, despite not having a clock or any way to tell, other than when they bring him food. His vision was blurry and he couldn't move. Blinking rapidly, he looked at his arms and legs and saw he was tied to the bed.

"What the fuck." He whispered, pulling at the ropes. Then, he noticed something, or someone sitting at a chair in the corner of the room. His eyes widened and he stared at her, immediately stopping his movements. She finally noticed him, eyes wide, a few minutes later.

"Hey, don't freak out, kid, okay? I'm not gonna hurt you." She said softly. "I'm going to explain a few things to you."

"W-what things?" He whispered. Her appearance itself was scary, especially considering the lights in his room-no, cell, were dim and looked like something from a horror movie.

"I'm gonna untie you, alright? Just don't freak out on me and I'll explain." He hesitated, but nodded. She untied him quickly and she flinched a little when he immediately moved himself to the corner, bringing his knees up to his chest. He's so skinny-too skinny for his age. She pushed her sleeve back and showed him her wrist.

"I'm not sure if Jane told you about me, but I'm-"

"Kali." He still whispered. She nodded as he eyed the numbers on her wrist. "El."

"Huh?"

"We call her El."

"Okay, El." She gave him a tiny smile. "What's your name?"

"M-Mike." He stuttered.

"Okay, Mike. I wish I was meeting you under different circumstances." She started and he just blinked at her. "Do you remember anything from a few hours ago?" He stayed silent for a minute or two.

"I...I remember them questioning m-me, beating me like always. But...I passed out?" He questioned it, looking at her. She nodded. "But I saw fire before I did." She nodded again.

"Do you have any idea how that could have started?" She asked. He shook his head.

"I just...I was so *mad*." He said. "I-I... It's like *I* did it. Did I do it? No, no, I couldn't have." She stood up and he flinched when she did. She sat on the bed next to him.

"Hey, hey, I already told you, I'm not gonna hurt you, okay?" He bit his lip but hugged his legs a little tighter. That's when he felt his wrist stinging. He lifted it up and looked at it. His eyes widened and his

breath hitched. *012.*

"W-what?" He asked, looking at her, eyes filled with fear. She grabbed his hand, squeezing it gently.

"You're... God, I hate to say this but... You're Experiment 012. To them, not to me." He shook his head.

"No, no! That's not possible." He tried to pull his hand away from her but she held onto it tightly.

"Look at me, Mike." She tried multiple times to get him to look at her, and he finally did. "You caused the fire, Mike."

"How? I-I don't have powers. It's impossible."

"But you do. You can produce fire."

"Then why hasn't it ever shown before? How come I didn't know?"

"You didn't try hard enough." She said like it was obvious. "They want to run tests and shit on you, but I'm not gonna let them. I've made a deal with them, and they have to do what I say if they want me to do what they want."

"A deal?" He asked.

"It's not that important. Not right now. I'm gonna be training you."

"Training me?"

"We're gonna figure out the extent of your abilities, like if you can just start the fire or if you can put it out too, or if you're immune to it."

9. Chapter 9

Next Day

"Mike." Mike felt someone shaking him awake. His eyes popped open, flinching away from the person. He let out a breath when he realized it was Kali.

"W-what?" He whispered.

"I brought you food." She said, and gestured to the tray that held two plates full of food and two water bottles. "You start training today, and you need a lot of energy." He eyed it as she put the plate in front of him. She sat on the bed next to him. They both had ham and cheese sandwiches, baby carrots, and red grapes. She took a bite out of her sandwich, and he followed suit, scarfing his down in a matter of minutes, along with the carrots, drinking half of his water bottle. "You're not gonna eat your grapes?" She asked him. He shook his head.

"I don't like fruit." He told her. She raised an eyebrow.

"Well, I don't eat carrots so you wanna trade?" He nodded and let her grab the grapes off his plate and he took the carrots. The two were quiet after they finished their food.

"It's Christmas Eve." He whispered, playing with his fingers. She nodded, giving his shoulder a soft squeeze.

"I know. I'm so sorry, Mike. I hate this."

"You can't stop them?" He asked. She shook her head.

"They threatened El. And promised me and her both a normal life if I trained you." He glared at her.

"Oh, so you're just trying to protect yourself? You don't give a damn about me, do you?"

"That's *not* what I said, Mike. Look, I'm training you so you can get stronger, so we can find out the depths of your ability. I'm going to

help you get out, one way or another. I promise." He looked at her, his expression softening when she said *promise.*

"Promise?"

"Promise." She gave him a smile and stood up. "I definitely did *not* want to start this today, but they're forcing me to, so we might as well get it over with. It'll just be me and you, okay?" She told him. He hesitated, and nodded, standing up with her. She opened the door and grabbed his hand and pulled him out the door. At the end of the hallway, Brandon and Taylor stood, keeping watch. They glared daggers at Mike as he and Kali passed them. She led him into a decent sized room, where there seemed to be a makeshift fire pit. One of the men locked the door, Mike wasn't sure which, but he didn't really care. Kali motioned for him to sit in the chair in front of the fire pit. She sat in the chair across from him, on the other side of the pit, where there were two pitchers of water. Neither said anything for a few minutes, Mike just looked around the room. It was brighter in here than in his room, and there was another bed in the corner, which he didn't pay much attention to to begin with. Sighing, Kali leaned down and picked up a piece of paper. She held it up for him to see and his eyes widened. It was a picture of his dad.

"W-Why do you have a picture of him?" He stuttered.

"Don't worry, it's just to... encourage you, really." She told him. "Your father was pretty shitty, wasn't he?"

"That's an understatement." He mumbled. He moved moved his bare feet around on the floor, enjoying the coolness of it.

"These pictures that I'm holding, I'm not sure how they got them, or how they know you're enemies with these people, but they want to use it to fuel your anger, and I know for a fact it'll help." She told him.

"What do you want me to do? Just stare at the paper?"

"Getting a little sassy now, are we?" She asked, grinning at him. He rolled his eyes.

"I'm ready to get out of here, so if doing this makes me stronger and gets me out faster, I'm all for it." He told her honestly. She nodded, biting her lip. She held the picture of his dad by the corner.

"Just concentrate on the picture, push all your anger out towards it. Think of all the times he's made you mad, all the times he's hurt you or your family." He nodded and stared at the picture.

Memories flooded his brain, all the times his father never spent time with him, how he always ditched him to watch TV and sleep. All the times he yelled at his mom for no reason. He could feel blood trickle out of his nose and his concentration on the picture grew stronger.

Last year when he found out about his father's affair and that he had children with another woman, how he thought Mike was 12 when he was almost 14. How he probably didn't even care that he was missing.

Suddenly, the picture burst into flames and Kali dropped it into the pit quickly, looking at Mike. She grabbed a tissue that had apparently been provided and handed it to him and he wiped his nose. He was definitely weaker, but he for some reason felt... good when the picture burst into flames. He looked at her, shocked with himself.

"I did that?" He asked, he almost didn't believe it. She nodded. "Cool." He muttered and she chuckled.

"Kinda the exact opposite, wouldn't you think?" He cracked a tiny smile at that. "Want to try another or would you rather rest?" She asked. He thought for a few seconds and said,

"I want to try another one." He told her and she nodded, picking up the next picture. It was of Troy. Mike glared at the picture, tilting his head down a little, similar to how El does. He thought about all the times he was tripped, how Troy tortured him throughout the years.

He thought about how Troy treated his friends, how he treated El. The thought of Troy cursing at them and threatening them while he's gone angered him even more, and the picture burst into flame quicker than the other one did. He wiped his nose as she dropped the picture.

"You're doing good, you should rest though." She told him. He nodded, his eyes felt heavy. "Wait, I just want to try something, okay?" She told him. He looked at her curiously as she grabbed some metal tongs with a rubber end on them, and picked up one of the pieces of wood in the fire. "Touch it, I want to see if you're immune or not." He looked at her, bewildered.

"I'm not touching fire!"

"Mike, trust me, okay? If you can create fire, I highly doubt it would hurt you." He bit his lip, and hesitated. He squeezed his eyes shut as he slowly moved his hand closer to the fire, bracing himself for the searing pain... But it never came. He had the wood in his hand, on fire, and it didn't even phase him. He opened his eyes, surprised. He looked at her and she looked at him. He dropped it into the pit. She took one of the pitchers of water next to her and poured it over the fire, putting it out, and poured the other one over it, just for good measure. She stood up and helped Mike up, and lead him over to the bed in the corner.

He wasn't as weak as he thought he'd be, and he's not sure if it's because of the food he'd eaten, or the fact that they didn't beat him senselessly today.

10. Chapter 10

Thursday, January 9, 1986

"It's been two months, freaks, you might as well just give up on frog face. He's probably dead." Troy said, walking past the Party, who were sitting on the sidewalk outside the school. It was lunch, and this was their usual spot.

"Yeah, I bet they cut him up and threw him in random places." James said, grinning.

"They probably buried him alive-" Troy couldn't finish his sentence, because he mysteriously tripped and fell face first into the pavement. El wiped her nose with her sleeve as discreetly as possible while Dustin held in a laugh. "I think my nose is broken!" Troy yelled in horror as he and James ran inside the school.

"Can you believe them? They have *no* heart." Will said, shaking his head. Lucas bit his lip. They were silent for a few minutes, El hugging her knees to her chest.

"Honestly guys? I don't think it's worth it anymore." Lucas said quietly. Everyone looked at him.

"What do you mean?" El asked.

"What if... What if they're right about Mike being dead?"

"Oh come on, Lucas, they don't know what they're talking about!" Dustin exclaimed, standing up, and the others followed suit.

"Like he said, it's been two months, Dustin. *Two months.*" Lucas said. "We can't just sit here and wait for Mike to just magically appear out of no where, perfectly fine. I'm tired of making myself believe he's actually out there, alive."

"He's not dead, El would know if he was-" Max started but Lucas interrupted her.

"Just like that connection bullshit? If that was true, why hasn't she

talked to him? Why haven't we found him yet? She's probably lying about that too." The next thing he knew, Lucas was slapped hard across the face by a fuming El.

"Go to hell." She spat at him, walking past him, roughly bumping his shoulder as she did so. Will followed her and Max and Dustin just stared at him with shocked faces.

"Mike is your best friend." Dustin hissed, jabbing a finger in his chest. "Your *best fucking friend* and you have no hope."

"I want closure, Dustin." Lucas hissed back. "I want to know if he's dead so I can have closure. I want to know if he's alive so I can apologize for not trying to save him." Dustin scoffed.

"If he was to show up right fucking now, you'd probably start a fight with him for being gone so long. Go fuck yourself, asshole." He walked off in the opposite direction. Lucas looked at Max.

"That was wrong, Lucas." She said.

"So you're mad at me too then?"

"No, just disappointed." She said quietly. Then the bell rang, "I'll see you later." She walked off as well. He groaned loudly and kicked a rock before making his way back inside.

"I-I can't believe he'd say something like that!" El cried into Hopper's shoulder. After she slapped Lucas at lunch, she went to the office and called him to come pick her up, and now they were back at the cabin, where she cried for at least an hour before explaining what happened.

"Lucas didn't mean it, El." Hopper said, rubbing her arm comfortingly. "He was just upset with Trey and Jamie."

"Troy and James." She mumbled.

"I honestly don't care, they're just little assholes who's opinions don't matter."

"And he did mean it. He's given up on him." She wiped her eyes. "You could see it in his eyes. He meant everything he said." He sighed.

"Well, when we find Mike he's gonna regret it." He told her and she nodded. "Do you want to stay here tonight while we search the lab or do you want to go to the Wheeler's?" He asked, already knowing the answer. The search had been postponed *again* and they're finally going tonight.

"Wheeler's." She mumbled. He nodded.

"You want some Eggos?" She nodded and she sat at the table while he made her Eggos.

"Be careful, Hop." Joyce told him, releasing him from the long hug.

"I will. I promise." He told her. He looked at El, who bit her lip as she looked down. He crouched in front of her. "Hey, look, we're going to search the *entire* building, okay? And you have to have hope that he's there. I'm not going to promise he's there, but I'm going to *hope* he is, okay?" She nodded and hugged him. After that, he left in his truck. El was literally vibrating in her seat, biting her lip nervously.

"Hey," Nancy put a hand on her shoulder. "We're gonna find Mike, okay? We're going to find him, one way or another." El nodded and hugged her.

"You're positive the boy is out of it?" Evans asked, crossing his arms. Kali nodded.

"I worked him harder today so he would sleep through it." She replied.

"Good, now, In approximately fifteen minutes, the search party will be here and enter the building. You need to make everyone and everything disappear."

"How long will it take?"

"Depends on how many people they've got. Prepare yourself, if you

fail, you, Experiment 0011 and 012 will die. I'll make sure of it." She glared at him and he walked out. She drank plenty of water and snacked on the food they gave her, and 15 minutes later, she sat on her bed, eyes closed and every ounce of evidence that Mike was here is gone.

11. Chapter 11

Last update for today guys! There definitely won't be as many updates tomorrow (probably one or two) since I've had this story pre-written for about two weeks now and I was in the mood to update a bunch XD. Anyways, in this chapter, you'll see what else Mike can do, and remember, the title is *Eloquent Abilities* meaning there's more than *one* ability ;)

P.S. Sorry for the multiple week(s) time skips, I have a good reason as to why I'm doing so, y'all just can't know XD.

It was after one o'clock in the morning when Hopper got back to the Wheeler's, empty handed and wanting to scream at anything and everyone. Everyone except for Lucas had come over while he was gone, and they were all awake, except for Holly. Even Bryan was there.

"Nothing. It looks exactly the same as it did last year when it closed." He said, plopping down on the couch and hugging El. "I'm sorry I didn't find him." He mumbled into her curls.

"It's not your fault." She whispered.

"He *could* have been there at some point. He could've been there a *month* ago. I should've pushed harder to get a search party over there."

"It's not your fault, Hop. You said it looked the same, right?" Joyce asked him, and he nodded.

"He most likely wasn't there. No one's been there in a year." Karen said, bluntly.

"I really am sorry though, I hoped and prayed he was there."

"We did too, Hop." Dustin piped up.

"You've done everything you can, and we know that." Max added and everyone nodded in agreement.

Saturday, January 25, 1986

Mike woke up early, probably an hour or so before he get's his breakfast. Sighing, he sat up and leaned against the cool wall. He tapped his fingers in a rhythmic beat. He hates the silence, he always has. He's been here almost three months, and it's one of the few things he can do to keep his mind off of the silence, and the ringing in his ears.

He tapped all the time, when he was alone, and sometimes when Kali was with him, and sometimes she'd join in with him, because she hates silence too. He leaned down and grabbed the water bottle next to his bed. He opened it and set it between his knees, holding it up. A few days ago, he discovered that he could *move* water. He could make it come out of the bottle just by focusing on it and moving his hand upwards. He still doesn't know how he figured it out, but he thought it was cool.

Unscrewing the lid, he did just that. He brought the water out of the bottle and spun his fingers around, the water doing everything he willed it to do. He thought about telling Kali today, it's not that big a deal, right? He doubted it, so he decided he would. Playing around with the water didn't make his nose bleed, which he was thankful for, because then they would know he would use his abilities outside of training, which he isn't supposed to do.

After a while, he put the water back into the bottle and drank it, knowing he'd get a new one anyways. There was a bang on the door and it opened, revealing an annoyed Taylor holding his food. He put it on the bed and walked back out without saying anything and slammed the door, which caused Mike to flinch. He sighed and ate the gross eggs and toast they gave him. The toast wasn't all that bad, just dry. The door opened again and in came Kali, just as he finished the eggs.

"You ready for training?" She asked, shutting the door. He nodded but didn't make a move to get up. She raised an eyebrow and he motioned for her to sit on the other end of the bed.

"I want to show you something." He said, biting his lip. She nodded

and did as he asked. He picked up his new water bottle and unscrewed the top, placing the bottle between his knees. She raised both eyebrows and her eyes widened when she saw the water just... float up into the air. Using his other hand, he twirled his index finger around the top and made it look like a whirlpool inside the bottle.

"Wow." She almost whispered.

"Cool, right? I can definitely put fire out now." He said, smiling slightly. She forced a smile and nodded. To her, it's not cool, it's serious. People like them... they're not supposed to have more than one ability, it's dangerous, and fire and water? That's definitely not a good mix.

"Don't let them know about your...other, ability, okay?" He nodded but asked,

"Why?"

"I don't know what they'll do exactly, but if they find out it won't be good. It's rare, extremely rare, to have more than one ability." She did know, what they would do to him, if they found out, but she was *not* going to tell him. He bit his lip and nodded. He put the water back in the bottle and put the cap back on it. "You ready to go? We're burning more pictures today *and* testing out how big a fire you can make." He nodded again and the two left his cell and into the training room. For about an hour or two, they burned the same few pictures repeatedly, each picture burning quicker than the last. Afterwards, he slept until lunch time, and she ate with him. It was the same thing everyday, ham and cheese sandwiches with carrots and grapes, and they'd always trade.

"You need to focus, Mike. Concentrate on the fire, nothing else. We don't want it to get out of hand." She told him. He nodded and stared at the fire pit, and there was a spark, which turned into flames. The flames rose higher and higher until they almost touched the ceiling, which surprised the both of them. The flames probably could have gotten higher but Mike stopped and put it out quickly with one swift motion.

"Well, not only can you use water to put out fire, you can put it out

yourself with a wave of your hand." She chuckled. She'd figured he could, but he hadn't tried until today.

"In a couple hours we're going to try something new, and that involves throwing fire at moving targets." His eyes widened at that. "No! Not alive! Just cardboard cutouts, I swear." He nodded and made his way over to the bed in the corner, where he promptly laid down and went to sleep. Sitting in the chair beside him, she sighed, racking her brain for something that could get her mind off of the fact that he has the ability to make and move fire and water.

12. Chapter 12

Friday, February 21, 1986
The Wheeler's

"How's school going, kiddo?" Bryan asked, sitting next to El. She sighed and shrugged, she'd been in the kitchen for the last hour doing her homework, or at least attempting to. Karen was trying to keep herself busy by cleaning everything in the kitchen.

"I'm passing. I'm not doing good in math though." She bit her lip. "Mike always helped me with it." He didn't say anything for a moment or two.

"I've always been pretty good at math, I could help you out? At least until Mike get's back." She looked at him, tears forming when he said that. She knew she wasn't the only one that's hopeful, but she's the only one that really let's it show. She nodded, sniffing, and taking out her workbook.

In the living room, Max and Will sat with Nancy, doing their homework as well. El had gone into the kitchen on her own, and they figured she just needed to work on it herself. Hopper and Joyce were babying her, trying to help her do every little thing that has to do with school. The two had gone to Lowes to get supplies to fix El's little...accident. She had a nightmare and may or may not have accidentally broke every window in the cabin...again.

"Why hasn't Lucas or Dustin come around in a while?" Nancy asked. It's been a couple weeks since Lucas stopped, but Dustin only recently hadn't come over. The two looked at each other.

"Um..." Max bit her lip. "El didn't tell you about Lucas?" Nancy shook her head.

"No, is he okay?"

"Yeah, he-he's fine." Will said, and looked at Max to continue.

"Troy and James were being assholes like usual and telling us we

need to give up on Mike and...and Lucas basically agreed with them." Nancy's jaw dropped, literally.

"Are you serious?" They nodded.

"He called El a liar, about the connection and why she hasn't found him yet. She slapped him and left." Will said. "I followed her so I don't know exactly what happened after that." He looked at Max again.

"I thought Dustin was going to punch the hell out of Lucas, honestly, but he didn't. He did give him shit about it though. They haven't talked since, which is why Lucas hasn't been coming around, and I think Dustin is staying away from us to try and get over Lucas acting the way he is. He hasn't given up on Mike though, I know that for a fact. Lucas is the only one."

"I never thought he'd give up on him." Nancy shook her head. "Not Lucas. They were so close at one time, you guys know that. I just... God I hate this so much." She put her head in her hands.

"Hey, Lucas might've given up on him but when we fine Mike, he's going to regret it." Will said, unknowingly using the same words Hopper had used on El that same day. She sniffed and nodded.

"Yeah, everyone that's given up is going to regret it. I know it's been three and a half months, but people have been missing longer and have come back. I mean, El was gone for almost a *year*."

"You're right." She wiped under her eyes and looked at them. "Mike *will* come home."

Sunday, March 2, 1986

"Where the fuck is she?" Brandon boomed, the door hitting the wall with a bang and an angry Taylor behind him. Mike jumped, scrambling back into the corner.

"Who?"

"Eight." He growled, grabbing Mike by the collar of his gown and

getting in his face. A thousand thoughts began running through his head, terrified thoughts.

"I-I don't know. She went to her room." He said, terrified of the man in front of him. He threw Mike against the wall and he let out a quiet yell.

"She's not in her room. She's not in the damn *building.* She escaped, and you have something to do with it." He grabbed him again, shoving him against the wall.

"I- I don't know! She wouldn't do that." He shook his head, swallowing harshly.

"Stop fucking lying to us, you little brat!" He punched him, and Mike knew he'd busted his lip.

"If you think, even for a second, about using your powers to protect yourself, I will kill you." Taylor hissed in his ear, and Brandon threw him on the ground.

"He's going to die anyways. She broke the deal, she lied to us. Eight and Eleven are as good as dead, and we'll use you as bait." He growled at Mike, kicking him in the side and Mike let out whimper. He curled himself into a ball.

"She-she didn't tell me anything, I-I swear." He begged. "P-please stop." That encouraged them and they both continued either kicking or hitting him.

They did this for what felt like hours, and left him, bleeding and bruised, on the ice cold floor. He couldn't stop the tears falling down his cheeks, dripping onto the floor and creating a puddle. He couldn't believe Kali, all the promises she made.

"I'm going to help you get out, one way or another. I promise."

"Promise?" He'd asked. She'd smiled at him and said,

"Promise."

She lied. She probably had this planned all along. She *wanted* them to

kill him, and he was going to die.

There was another bang of the door and he opened his eyes and saw Evans standing there, a gun in his hand. Mike's breath quickened and he squeezed his eyes shut. He thought of his family and friends and Eleven, how much he missed them, how badly he wanted to go home. He felt the gun press into his hair and he braced himself, waiting for the darkness to consume him completely, but it never came.

13. Chapter 13

He stayed completely still for a few seconds, but opened his eyes when he felt a cold breeze. He was in the woods, alone. He let out a shaking breath, eyes wide, as he looked around. It was bizarre to him, he hasn't seen the outside in almost *four* months. He sat up, hugging himself, trying to warm up. He felt blood dripping down his chin. The sun was starting to go down, and he couldn't help but stare at the sky through the trees for a minute or two.

How did I get here? He thought. *Am I dreaming? No, no, I can't be, it feels too real.*

He managed to stand up and braced himself against a tree, his entire body aching. While there was still a little bit of light shining through, he looked around in an attempt to figure out where he actually *was*. He realized he was in the woods near his house, *far* away from his house. He knew this because of the tree he was leaning against. He ran his fingers across the letters *M & E.* They'd carved it into a tree far away from his house, so no one else would see. He walked in the direction of his house, stumbling and tripping, almost falling, multiple times, until he finally collapsed in some bushes, that hid him pretty well.

Suddenly, a whirlwind of emotions blasted through him; anger, denial, hope, and *despair*. Instantly, he thought of El. During his time in the lab, he was unable to contact her. It was as though something was blocking her from him.

El

Nothing, so he tried again.

El...please...

El had been sound asleep in Mike's bed when she heard him. She thought she was dreaming until she heard his voice say *El.* Her eyes snapped open and she heard it again.

El...please...

Mike?

It was a few seconds before he responded

El...need help...

Where are you?

Woods...bushes...home...

Mike, where?

Near home...I can't...no hospital

No hospital? Why?

After me...hurts...tired...

Who is after you?

He didn't respond.

Mike?

Nothing. She shot up and raced downstairs.

"Dad! Joyce! Mrs. Wheeler!" She all but screamed.

"What? What?" Hopper demanded, meeting her at the bottom of the stairs. Karen and Joyce were behind him.

"It's Mike. I heard him."

"What do you mean you heard him?" Karen asked.

"Our connection. I thought I was dreaming, but I wasn't."

"What did he say?" Hopper asked, ready to put his shoes and jacket on to find the kid.

"He needs help. He said he's in the woods near home and that he

can't..."

"He can't what?" Joyce asked as Hopper pulled his shoes and jacket on.

"He didn't say. He said no hospital and that people are after him. He said he's hurt and tired."

"Let's go." Hopper ordered. The three quickly pulled their shoes and jackets on and literally ran out into the woods behind the house. They split up, and Hopper went on his own, the other three going together. They searched for thirty minutes, with *no* luck.

That is, until Hopper looked into a fairly big bunch of bushes and caught sight of something white. He spread the leaves apart even more and revealed Mike, bruised and bloody, curled up into a shivering ball.

"Oh, Mike." He breathed, putting a hand on Mike's arm. Mike flinched away and looked at him, eyes wide.

"H-Hopper?" He whispered.

"Yeah, kid, it's me. I'm here. Come on." He helped Mike up and noticed how skinny the boy was, not to mention how much taller he is. He was wearing nothing but a hospital gown. His dark, curly hair almost reached his shoulders now. Hopper took his jacket off quickly, wrapping it around Mike. "God, kid, what happened to you?" He whispered, already knowing he wouldn't get an answer. He pulled Mike into a hug, and he flinched, but fell into it, hugging the Chief tightly, as if his life depended on it, and right now, it probably felt like it did. Tears fell from Hopper's eyes, relief flooding through his body, but he made sure Mike didn't see. He pulled away and held Mike at arms length. His eyes were sunken in, he had dark circles under his eyes, his face terribly skinny. He looked so much older. He had dried blood dripping down his chin, coming from his nose. His bottom lip was swollen, and he had scratches and bruises all over his face and from what he could see, they were all over his arms and legs, and probably the rest of his body, if not worse. Mike swayed and Hopper put an arm around his back, keeping him steady.

"I-I know you're tired, kid, but do you think you can tell El I got you?" Mike hesitated slightly, and closed his eyes. "Tell them to head back to your house."

El...

Mike? Where are you? We're looking for you!

With Hopper. Go home, be there soon.

He almost collapsed again, but Hopper caught him, and put his other arm under his legs, lifting him up with ease. The boy probably weighed a hundred pounds, more or less. Making sure the jacket was wrapped around Mike tightly, he walked as quickly as he could towards Mike's house, where the three worried women were waiting anxiously. When Karen saw him carrying Mike, she ran full speed towards him, and literally yanked Mike away from him and into her own arms. She was sobbing so hard she couldn't speak, and Mike had joined her but his sobs couldn't be heard. He hugged her back just as tight as she hugged him.

El didn't know how to react, she was frozen in place. All she could see of Mike was his hair and legs. A few minutes later, Hopper had to pry Mike away from Karen so he could get him inside

"El..." Mike whispered when he finally saw her. With that, she wrapped her arms around him, tears threatening to fall, and walked into the house, hugging him and supporting him. She took him to the couch, where he instantly curled up into a ball, but he wouldn't take his eyes off her. She put a blanket over him as he stared at her.

She was even more beautiful than the last time he saw her. Her hair was still just as curly, and just passed her shoulders. He stared at her face, it was slimmer. She had dark circles under her eyes but her eyes... Her eyes shined with tears and relief. He only turned away from her when he saw his mom crouching in front of him, eyes puffy and red, but with a smile on her face. She stroked his hair.

"I can't believe you're home." She whispered to him. He lifted his hand up and put it over hers, looking up at her, eyes half closed. His whole body hurt, especially his head.

"Mom?" He whispered, that's all he would-no, that's all he could do, is whisper.

"What, baby? What do you need? I'll get you anything." He blinked a few times, he didn't really *know* what he wanted, just couldn't stop looking at her. He thought he'd never see her again, but here she was. El too, even Hopper and Joyce.

"Mom." He whispered again, squeezing her hand gently. She knew then, he was silently telling her to stay with him.

"Joyce, can you bring me a wet dishcloth?" She called quietly, and Joyce did as she was asked, coming back with a warm, wet dishcloth. Mike let her hand go and grabbed El's as he let Karen push his hair out of his face and gently wipe away all the blood and dirt off his face. All of a sudden, the front door opened with a bang and Mike jumped so hard he almost fell off the couch.

14. Chapter 14

This is the last pre-written chapter I have for this story, so I won't be updating as often as you or I'd like XD, but there's more drama to come, Dustin, Max, and Lucas are told about Mike soon (not in the next chapter, probably chapter 16), Lucas has regrets, Mike tells them where he was, why he wasn't found the night Hopper looked for him in the lab, and his abilities are revealed.

P.S. Yes, one of those abilities is teleportation ;D

"Mom! I'm home! We brought food!" Nancy called. Mike was relieved when he realized it was just her. Karen stood up quickly and went to meet her, Jonathan, and Will at the door. The three had gone to see a movie and grab dinner. "I brought extra because I know Hopper loves Chinese food-Wait, are you okay? What happened?" Nancy asked once she saw her mom's puffy eyes.

"I-It's about Mike." She started, and Nancy's heart sank. "H-He's home. He's in there."

"What?" Nancy almost yelled, and ran the few feet into the living room, where Mike had sat up with the help of El. Jonathan and Will rushed in after her. Nancy covered her mouth with her hands, and no one could tell if it was a sob or a laugh when she saw Mike, wrapped in Hopper's jacket still, a blanket covering his lower half.

"Oh my God, Mikey!" She rushed over to him and squished her self between him and the armrest, hugging him tightly. He hugged her back, resting his head on her shoulder with his arms around her stomach and back. She just burst into tears, happy tears. She started whispering *oh my God* over and over, stroking his hair as if he was a baby. Opening his eyes, he saw Jonathan and Will standing in the doorway.

"Nancy..." He whispered and she looked at him, and then to where he was looking. She let him go and stood up. He stood up, swaying slightly, and she steadied him, and Mike took two long strides towards them and hugged Will.

"Oh my God, Mike. Is this real?" Will asked, hugging him back. Mike was a lot taller than him now. He felt Mike nod. Will let Mike go and Jonathan hugged him as well.

"Mom?" Mike asked, still whispering for the most part. She walked over to him and put her hands on his shoulders. "Where's Holly? And Rosie?"

"Oh, she's at a friends house. She'll be home soon. I can go get her early." She rushed to tell him. He shook his head. "Rosie is at Bryan's house. Come on, let's get you into some real clothes." She told him, and grabbed his hand. He followed her slowly, his entire body aching. He looked around, taking it all in. To everyone else, the way he looked around made it seem like he's never seen anything like it. Once Mike and Karen were out of sight, El broke, sobbing into her hands. Joyce and Hopper immediately went to her.

"I-I never thought that-that I'd see him again." She cried. "A-and he looks so-so broken." No one said anything as Joyce and Hopper attempted to calm her down. Meanwhile, Karen got Mike some clothes to change into. He still had Hopper's jacket wrapped around him.

"Mikey?" Mike looked at her. "I know you're tired and hungry, but do you want to take a shower?" She asked. A *real* shower sounded pretty good to him right about now.

"Hot water?" He asked.

"Of course." He nodded, and the two went to the bathroom. She turned the water on for him, grabbing a wash cloth and towel for him while he stood next to the shower. She almost burst into tears when he took the jacket off and she saw just how skinny he was.

"Need anything else?" She asked, biting her lip. He was wringing his hands, biting his lip, just like she was doing. He shook his head. "I'll be right downstairs, baby." She told him, and started to shut the door, but he stopped her, shaking his head.

"No."

"You don't want it closed?" She asked. He shook his head again. He opened it a little more, just enough for him to get a good look into the hallway. "Okay then. I'm going to make you something to eat, but yell if you need me, okay?" He nodded. "Is there anything specific you want?" He shrugged.

"What ever's easier for you." He said quietly. She gave him a smile and decided she'd make one if his favorites, which was her fried chicken **(guys fried chicken is the in my book XD)**. She went downstairs and into the kitchen, immediately grabbing everything necessary.

He didn't bother to look at himself in the mirror, just just took off the gown and his underwear and got in the shower, the hot water feeling amazing on his cold skin. He took his time, scrubbing every inch of his body as hard as he could to get all the dirt and dried blood off him. He washed his hair for the first time in probably two weeks. He stood under the hot water for a few minutes. If it had been anyone else, it'd have been way too hot for them to bare.

"He wouldn't let me shut the door all the way." Karen told Joyce and Hopper as she put the chicken in the grease. "He's so skinny. He's always, always been skinny but this? This is unbelievably skinny." Hopper nodded in agreement.

"His height definitely doesn't help." He said. In the living room, El, Will, Nancy and Jonathan sat talking.

"Don't you think we should let Dustin, Max, and Lucas know?" Will asked.

"We should let Mom, Hopper, and Mrs. Wheeler decide that. And Mike too, you see how weak he is. He needs to eat and then rest." Jonathan told him. El nodded in agreement, but that was just because she didn't want to see Lucas. She hasn't said a word to him since the day he gave up on Mike.

"Plus it's getting late, they should stay home." Nancy added,even though it was only 7:30. For the next thirty minutes or so, it was quiet, until they heard footsteps and saw Mike coming down the stairs in a sweatshirt and sweatpants, black socks on his feet, his hair

dripping slightly. He had his arms crossed over his chest, biting his lip as if he was nervous.

"Feel better, kid?" Hopper asked, leaning against the wall by the door.

"Good as I can get." He replied quietly. *At least he's not whispering anymore,* Hopper thought, *but damn his voice got deep.*

"Oh! You're back, okay, I made you fried chicken." Karen said nervously. She's not sure why she's nervous, she just is. He nodded and made his way to the dining room, the other's following him. He sat down between El and Nancy, who had warmed up all the food she, Will, and Jonathan brought. "What do you want to drink, baby?" She asked.

"Uh..."

"There's Coke, Diet Coke, Kool-Aid, Mountain-"

"Kool-Aid." He told her. She nodded and poured him a glass. She gave it to him and he drank it slowly, closing his eyes and enjoying the taste. She grabbed a plate and put two chicken legs and a thigh on it and got a napkin and put it in front of Mike. He looked up at her, almost as if he was asking if he could eat yet.

"Go ahead, help yourself." She told him, sitting on the other side of Nancy. Not even five minutes later, he'd cleaned both chicken legs and half of the thigh. They tried not to stare at him, but that's really all they could do as they attempted to eat their own food.

"Do you want more?" Karen asked when he finished. His face turned a bit pink and he nodded. She gave him a smile and this time got him one leg and two thighs. He ate slower this time. "If you want anymore after that I'll gladly make more." She told him. He shook his head.

"This is fine." He replied. He finished a few minutes before they did, and sat there, basically vibrating in his seat.

15. Chapter 15

"Are you cold, Sweetie?" Joyce asked him. He shook his head.

"Nerves." El grabbed his hand and squeezed it lightly. He looked at her and gave her the tiniest of smiles. There was a knock on the door and Mike almost fell out of his chair. He did, in fact, stand up and hide behind Hopper. Karen looked at him, eyes wide.

"It's okay, Mike, it's probably just Holly." She told him. He bit his lip, crouching behind Hopper's chair. Karen then came back a few minutes later with Holly behind her. Mike couldn't believe his eyes, she looked so much older, even though it's only been a few months. He stood up and she noticed him. She dropped everything and ran at him, almost knocking him down.

"Mikey!" He got down on his knees and she wrapped her arms around his neck, burying her face in his hair. He hugged her back, squeezing his eyes shut. "I missed you." He whispered.

"I missed you too. Don't do that again." She scolded him. He let out a breath that could've been a laugh.

"I won't. Never again." They hugged for what seemed like hours, when in reality, it was only five minutes. She released him and he stood up.

"You're so tall!" She exclaimed.

"Uh, yeah..." He bit his lip. He wanted to smile but... he just couldn't bring himself to do it.

"We should probably get going." Joyce said. "Mike needs a lot of rest."

"But-"

"We'll come back first thing in the morning." Joyce promised him. He sighed and nodded. She and Jonathan helped clean up the dishes, while Mike sat with Holly in the recliner and Will sat on the couch, telling him about his classes.

"One of the science teacher's accidentally set their classroom on fire and the whole school was out for three days because of the smell." Mike just listened to him talk.

"Alright, you ready to go?" Joyce asked. Will sighed and nodded, grabbing his jacket. He hugged Mike and went to the door as Joyce and Jonathan hugged him too.

"We'll come and see you tomorrow, okay?" Mike nodded. Will reluctantly followed his mom and brother out the door.

"You need to get ready for bed, Holly." Karen told her.

"But-"

"I'll still be here." Mike told her. "I'm not going anywhere, I promise." She sighed and nodded, hugging him before stomping up the stairs. Mike raised an eyebrow. "She's got some attitude, huh?"

"Like you wouldn't believe." Nancy said, smiling slightly.

"Alright, kid-" Hopper started to say, but El interrupted.

"No. I'm staying here." He chuckled.

"I didn't say you couldn't. I was *going* to say that I'm gonna head out. In the morning I'm gonna write a report saying Mike was found-"

"No!" Mike exclaimed and they looked at him, surprised.

"Why not?" Hopper asked.

"They'll find me. I don't want to leave again." He said, his eyes beginning to water.

"Who's going to find you?" El asked softly, joining him on the recliner. He bit his lip and fidgeted with the end of his sleeve. He began shaking again and he shook his head. Hopper looked at Karen, who looked nervous too.

"Well, I won't say anything, but tomorrow I need you to tell me something, Mike, okay? Because then I can do everything in my

power to protect you." Mike let out a breath and nodded. Hopper ruffled his hair and gave Mike a smile. He kissed El on the head and left after talking to Karen for a few minutes. Nancy came and sat in the living room with Mike and El, and Karen joined after making sure Holly was in bed.

El had her arms wrapped around Mike, playing with a strand of his hair. He was wide awake though, the action used to make him sleepy, but not this time.

"Hey, Mikey." Karen knelt next to the recliner. He turned his head slightly to look at her. "Do you want to go get in your bed?" His eyes widened and he shook his head. "Why not?"

"Don't wanna be alone." He mumbled. "Not anymore."

"You won't be, sweetie." She brushed some hair out of his eyes.

"I-I can stay with him, Mrs. Wheeler." El told her softly. Mike tightened his grip on her shirt, as if silently agreeing with her. Karen nodded. El looked at Mike. "Do you want to go now? I know you're tired." He shook his head.

"Later." He mumbled, resting his forehead on her shoulder. "I w-want to stay with you guys." He said quietly.

"We'll be right here, Mikey." Nancy told him, reaching forward and patting his leg. He looked at her and nodded. Karen stood up and sat next to Nancy on the couch, wrapping one arm around her and hugging her. The two sat like that for the next few hours, watching Mike and El, as El whispered to him quietly and he listened, hanging on to every word.

Six hours earlier

Lying on her bed, Kali looked at the clock Evans had so *graciously* given her when they first got a hold of her a couple months ago. Yes, she can escape, but she can't take Mike with her. He isn't strong enough, and Mike didn't know this, but they're slowly weakening her too, and she could only use her powers for a short amount of time,

not nearly enough time to get them both safely out and far from the building.

What time is it? A voice asked. Sighing, she closed her eyes and responded.

Three O'clock.

Are you coming, then?

I'm going to try, but if I get caught, I'm blaming you.

I'll be waiting, pretty girl.

She blushed slightly, a small smile forming on her face.

Oh shut it, Shawn. I'll see you soon.

She stood up from the bed and opened the door, they had strangely left it unlocked. Of course, she's the reason why, she made it seem like they locked it already, so they didn't bother with it. She looked around, making sure no one saw her. Shutting the door and actually locking it this time, she concentrated and made herself disappear. As she walked by Mike's room, all she felt was guilt.

"I'll come back for you, Mike. I promise." She whispered and continued down the hall. She found the door for the stairs and opened it. Making her way down the stairs, she spotted the emergency exit. Taking a deep breath, she wiped the blood from her nose and pushed the door open, the brightness almost blinding her. Squinting, she looked around. *The gate's open, why is it open?* Then she saw a van on it's way towards the gate. *Well, that's why then.* She darted towards the gate, passing by with ease and running into the woods. When she was far enough away, she let her guard down and wiped her nose again.

"Nice to see you again, pretty girl." Shawn said, grinning from ear to ear at the dark haired girl. He leaned against a tree, having just appeared himself. She looked at him, grinning right back. He held his arms out and walked towards her. She met him halfway and hugged him tight. He returned the favor. "I can tell how weak you are. What have they been doing to you?" He mumbled.

"I don't know what it is exactly, but I heard them talking about it." She replied. "As far as I know, it's not permanent, which is why they gave it to me so often. They put it in my food."

"What about Twelve?" He asked, pulling away and looking at her. She shook her head.

"He's still weak, but not because of them, because of his powers." He nodded.

"Fire and water, right?" She nodded. "That's almost... hell on earth."

"I know, which is why we need to get him out of there, and soon."

"We will, okay? We just need to get the others first. He needs as much protection as anyone else. The Projects will *not* get to him." She took a breath and nodded, grabbing his right hand and flipping it over, running her finger across the number.

006

16. Chapter 16

I meant to say this in the last chapter, but our joint account is working again! XD

Monday, March 3, 1986

Mike woke up around 9 the next morning, El right beside him, his mom and Nancy on the couch, watching TV. He'd fallen asleep in the recliner last night, listening to El's soft whispers, and none of them wanted to wake him up. He looked peaceful, and they didn't have the heart to do it. He shifted slightly and looked at El, who was looking at him, eyes wide open.

"Hey." She whispered, putting her hand against his cheek lightly.

"Hey." He whispered back. He felt Nancy and his mom's eyes on him so he looked at them and they gave him small smiles.

"Are you hungry? I was just about to go make breakfast." Karen said, standing up. She noticed him try and cover up a yawn and continued, "You can go back to sleep after, I don't want you to be hungry." He bit his lip and a few seconds later, nodded.

"Can I get up for a minute, Mike? I have to use the bathroom." El told him quietly. He nodded immediately and quickly got up, instantly regretting it when he felt pain shooting through his body. He braced himself against the wall with his right arm and grimaced.

"Hey, whoa, Mike, are you okay? What happened?" Nancy asked, rushing over to him as El got up quickly and went to his side. He took a couple of deep breaths and nodded.

"I'm okay just...sore." He replied softly. Nancy noticed something on his wrist but he let it fall to his side before she could get a good look at it.

"I'm going to get you something." She told him. He nodded.

"Are you sure you're okay?" El asked, worriedly. He nodded again,

and attempted a smile, which looked more like a grimace. "O-okay, I'll be right back, promise." She gave him a smile and he definitely smiled a little at that. He walked down the hall slowly and stopped in front of the mirror. He stared at himself, instantly noticing the dark bruise on his jaw, and the small split at the corner of his bottom lip. He noticed how much *older* he looked, even in just a couple of months. His hair's gotten curlier, longer, his features have sharpened. He stared at himself until he saw Nancy walk up behind him, and saw how much taller he is than her now. He bit his lip and turned to her.

"I guess you aren't my *little* brother anymore, huh?" She asked. He rolled his eyes and shook his head.

"You're still my big sister." He replied, and hugged her. She didn't expect it but hugged him back, burying her face in his shoulder.

"I got you some pain reliever." She told him, pulling back a bit. He nodded. "It's what's left over from that surgery I had in the middle of last year." He took the pills from her and took them, washing them down with the water she gave him.

"Thanks." She squeezed his shoulder gently, and led him into the kitchen. Karen was making pancakes, and Mike's stomach growled. Nancy giggled quietly and his cheeks turned pink.

"Hey, I'm surprised you haven't heard my stomach growl yet." She joked and he smiled slightly.

"Is Holly at school?" He asked. Karen nodded.

"I would have let her stay home but she would've tortured you." He knew she was using it as a joke, but he stiffened at the word. Karen gasped when she saw him stiffen.

"Oh, baby, I'm sorry." She rushed over to him and hugged him. "I'm sorry, I didn't know I-"

"I know." He interrupted. "It's not your fault." She hugged him a little longer before reluctantly finishing up breakfast as El came back into the kitchen.

After making sure Mike had a full stomach, Karen sent him back to bed, but he was dead set on not being alone in his room so he slept on the couch. Nancy helped El with her studies in the living room and Karen tried to keep herself busy around the house, although all three kept their eyes on him. He was woken up again for lunch, and went right back to sleep after.

After School

"Lucas! Max!" Will called, jogging over to them with a reluctant Dustin behind him. Max smiled at the two and Lucas completely ignored Dustin. Will hasn't had a chance to talk to any of them today, even though they had a couple classes together. The teachers had them doing tons of classwork.

"Hey guys." Max said, grinning.

"Hey, Max." Dustin said, grinning at her.

"Hey, Will." Lucas nodded to him.

"You guys are *not* gonna believe me when I tell you this," Will started.

"What?" They asked.

"First, I'm not trying to start an argument here, but Lucas, you were wrong." Lucas raised an eyebrow.

"Wrong about what?"

"Mike." All three pairs of eyes widened.

"What is *that* supposed to mean?" Max asked.

"Mike's back. He's home."

"How the hell do you even know this?" Dustin asked. Lucas just crossed his arms.

"Jonathan and Nancy took me to a movie last night, and when we got back to the Wheeler's, Mike was there. They found him in the woods

behind his house." They still looked skeptical, but Max had hope in her eyes. "If you don't believe me, come with me to their house. Jonathan will take us." As if on cue, Jonathan drove up behind them, honking the horn. Dustin rushed over to the drivers side and asked,

"Is it true? Is Mike home?" Jonathan grinned and nodded.

"Put your bikes in the back and hop in." He told them. They all rushed to get in, even though Lucas was still skeptical about it all.

"Mike's been gone for almost four months, how in the *hell* is he back all of a sudden?" He asked.

"Look, all we know is that Mike somehow contacted El through their connection and told her where he was, and Hopper found him in the woods. It was a good ways away from his house though. He was bruised and bloody and he wouldn't tell Hopper what happened. I don't know if he has yet or not." Jonathan explained. No one said anything for a few minutes, and Lucas said,

"Hey, Dustin-"

"Look, Lucas, I'm still pissed at you for what you said, but I'm not gonna tell Mike you said it." Dustin interrupted and Lucas shut his mouth. "You need to apologize to El, *and* Mike. I don't care when or how you do it, but you're gonna do it, understand?" He nodded and didn't say another word. The second they saw Mike's house, they noticed Hopper's truck, Joyce's car, and strangely Steve's car. Jonathan parked and before they had a chance to open the doors, he locked them and turned to face them.

"Okay, I know you guys are excited about seeing him, but you need to chill out, okay? He looks a lot different from when you guys last saw him, and it's not a pretty sight." They nodded. "I'm gonna go make sure he's up for visitors, and I'm sure he is. I'll wave to you guys to let you know, okay?" They nodded again and he got out. Will turned to them then.

"How bad is it, Will?" Max asked quietly.

"He's so skinny." He said. "Mike's always been skinny, but this is

ridiculous. He's tall as *hell,* like Steve's height, and his hair is longer. He looks a lot older, but I guess him being where ever he was did that."

"Wow." Dustin mumbled. Max pointed towards the front door and saw Jonathan waving to them, and they instantly got out of the car and ran up to him.

"Be careful with him, okay? His mom said he's still weak." They nodded and he moved aside to let them in, and when they saw Mike, they stopped in their tracks. All eyes went to them, including Mike's. He'd changed out of his sweats and into a pair of jeans Steve brought over to him, and one of his old ridiculous long sleeved sweaters, and is standing at the entrance of the kitchen. El was close by, leaning against the wall next to Hopper.

"Mike..." Max breathed. Dustin pushed passed her and Lucas and went straight for Mike, who walked forward and met him in the middle.

"Good God, Mike I swear if you ever pull a stunt like that again!" Dustin was basically in tears as he hugged Mike. Mike hugged him back tightly, shaking his head. Lucas and Max joined in and Mike wrapped his arms around all three of them, his own tears falling. Will and El couldn't help but join, and they all cried together.

17. New Characters, Very Important!

Hey guys! Sorry for another A/N, but this is actually kind of important lmao. I have five spots open for new characters, and if you guys want to be in the story or make up your own character, all you have to do is either review or PM me everything below :)

Name

Age

Gender

Birthday (day, month, year)

Height

Eye and hair color

Number between 1-5, 7, 9-10

Ability

Backstory (not required, only if you want one)

New chapter in a couple days! I promise! XD

18. List of New Characters :D

Okay, wow guys, I didn't think I would get so many requests! I've decided to extend the number from five and use everyone that has requested so far (so if anyone sends me a review or PM after this post is up, you probably won't be in this story, but maybe a future one!) So many people requested 9, so I have to change some of you guys numbers, so sorry about that :\.

Anyways, I planned to have more than five new characters anyways, I was just gonna come up with some of them myself, but I decided that I want to use everyone so far, so here is the list of new characters! (plus your username :)

SSJGamerYT: Catherine Rose, number B004

Mrs Richie Tozier: Mackenzie Knight, number 005

Yohnos: John Smith, Number 001

phieillydinyia: Andi, 010

bubberduckle2: Polly, 003

bubbles237: Brittany, 004

THESTRANGERLAB: Tannern, B001

CDsis: Nora, 002

KeepCalmandLoveStrangerThings: Ender, B009

iAmCC: CeCe, B007

speedermeen: Axel, 009

Thanks everyone for your submissions! I was just going to use five of them, but I love the characters you guys sent me *already* so I want to use them :) Some of your numbers I might have changed, and those with a *B* in front of your number, there will be an explanation :D

Sorry if all this is confusing, I'm not good at explaining stuff lmao XD your characters will begin to be introduced in Chapter 18, but the backstories probably won't be told for a couple more chapters.

19. Chapter 17

They stood there for what seemed like forever, until Joyce said,

"Alright, kids, let him breath." They all let him go and wiped their eyes.

"Let's go sit in the living room, yeah? Then we'll explain everything we know." Hopper told them, and they nodded. Mike sat on the couch between his mom and Nancy, Joyce sat next to Karen and Jonathan next to Nancy, and El sat on the floor in front of him. The rest of the party sat on the floor and Steve joined them. Finally, Hopper sat in the recliner, and Holly was upstairs taking a nap.

"Last night, around 7 o'clock, I was sleeping in Mike's bed." El started, "And I heard his voice in, in my head. I thought I was dreaming but then he said my name again and I knew I wasn't. He told me where he was as best he could."

"And we," Hopper motioned towards himself, El, Karen and Joyce, "went out looking for him. I found him in the bushes and brought him back home." He decided not to give every single detail.

"How did you get out there, Mike? Where were you?" Dustin asked quietly. Mike bit his lip.

"Look, kid, you don't have to tell us until you're ready, okay?" Hopper told him. Mike shook his head.

"I-I want to get it over with." He replied. "I was in the lab." He stated, and before he continued, Hopper stopped him.

"Wait, hold up, you were in the *lab*? As in Hawkins Lab?" Mike nodded. "No, you couldn't have been! We searched every inch of that place."

"I was there." He repeated, looking at him.

"That's not possible." Hopper shook his head. Mike's eyes narrowed as his brain started working, trying to figure it out. He clenched his jaw when he realized it. Kali, she could show or hide anything and

everything she wants, and that's exactly what she did.

"Kali." He mumbled.

"What was that?" Steve asked.

"Kali." He repeated, loud and clear, and El turned to look at him, eyes wide. "Kali hid me, she was there." Everyone knew who Kali was, El had told them a few weeks after she came back.

"Start from the beginning, do you know exactly *why* they took you?" Joyce asked him.

"They wanted information on El." He said. "I didn't tell them *anything*. I told them she was dead and that I watched her die, but they didn't believe me, and they beat me, *everyday*. They took me to this interrogation room everyday and asked the same questions. I gave the same answers and they'd beat me for it." He bit his lip for a few seconds before continuing. "They fed me twice a day, breakfast and dinner. That's how I knew it was a new day."

"I'm so sorry, Mike." El said, moving onto her knees and hugging him. "It's my fault they did this to you." He shook his head, but hugged her back.

"No it wasn't El. S-something else happened." She released him, confused. "It...It happened on my birthday." He was getting hot, nervous about talking about it, so he pushed his sleeves up, not thinking about it, and that's when Nancy saw it.

"Mike, *what is that*?" She demanded, grabbing his wrist. He froze, looking at it himself. She looked at the number, 012. "Why is this on your wrist? What did they do to you?" Mike didn't say anything, and everyone on the couch saw his wrist, including El. She gasped and grabbed his hand, running her finger across the number.

"Twelve." She whispered.

"Twelve? What the fuck do you mean?" Max asked, moving forward to look. Mike started shaking.

"Mike, sweetie, what is it?" Karen asked, putting an arm around him.

He yanked his arm back and began wringing his hands as he stood up. He walked a couple feet away from them and gripped his hair.

"I-I didn't know." He whispered. "I didn't know I was like this." He said, louder this time.

"Mike..." El got off the floor and stood in front of him, gently grabbing his hands. He stepped back, putting his hands behind his back.

"I don't want to hurt you."

"Hurt me? You won't hurt me, Mike."

"I have powers." He whispered but everyone heard him. "I-I can produce fire, I can move water."

"That's not funny, kid." Hopper said, giving him a look. Mike looked at him, suddenly confident, and promptly walked in the kitchen and grabbed a cup. He filled it with water and walked back into the living room. He held his right hand over it and brought the water up, waving his hand around and allowing the water to follow his movements.

"What the hell?" Karen whispered. He concentrated on the water as he put the cup on the table next to him, and held his other hand out, palm up. Everyone jumped back in fright when they saw his hand catch on fire.

"What the fuck!" Dustin almost screamed. Mike felt the blood come out of his nose as the small flame got bigger, covering his entire hand. Mike moved his right hand in a circular motion and created a whirlpool, mid-air.

"That's so cool." Max said, almost in a daze. Mike closed his hand and the fire went out, and he put the water back in the cup, placing it on the table. It was silent for a few seconds before everyone started yelling, asking questions. He wiped the blood with his sleeve.

"How did you not know?"

"What the hell?"

"This is crazy, this is crazy, this is crazy!"

"What happened after that? Did they start doing experiments on you?"

"Did they shave you hair off?"

"Does it look like they shaved his hair off, dipshit?"

"You guys, shut up and let him talk!" Will exclaimed. Everyone shut up, shocked. Will rarely ever raised his voice. He looked at Mike, who had shrunk back against the wall, terrified they would turn on him. "Hey, don't worry, we're not mad, or scared." He said gently.

"Come here baby." Karen said, motioning for him to come back and sit. He hesitated, and El grabbed his hand and gently pulled him back over to his mom, who pulled him into a hug.

"I swear, I didn't know. I was just so mad and it happened." He whispered.

"What happened next, Mike." Hopper said, softly. Mike swallowed and said,

"It was my birthday and, and they were taking me back to my cell, and I set their lab coats on fire. When I woke up, I was tied to my bed and this was on my wrist." He took a breath and continued, "Kali was there, she explained to me what happened. They wanted to run tests on me, but she wouldn't let them, so she trained me instead. Training for what, I don't know. She made a deal with them."

"A deal? What kind of deal?"

"Honestly? I don't know if I can even believe everything she told me, but she said that they told her that if she trains me, her and El will have a normal life." He shrugged. "She told me that she would help me get out, when I was stronger. She lied." He said simply. "Everyday, I would test my powers by burning pictures of my *enemies,* as she said, like dad and Troy." He shook his head. "We tested how high I could make the flames, if I was immune to it or not, and like you guys saw, I am. It's just the smoke that would hurt me.

It was boring in there, quiet. I couldn't stand the ringing in my ears, so I tapped against the metal on the bed. I would do it for hours. Sometimes, I'd just shake the water bottle, and that's how I figured out that I can move water." He continued telling them about the training, and eventually became quiet, although his shaking stopped.

"Where's Kali now?" El asked, softly.

"I don't know. She left me." He replied. "Yesterday morning, we trained, and I haven't seen her since. The two guys who would interrogate me came in and asked me where she was, and started beating me because I didn't know where she was. They said that...that they were gonna kill me."

"Why would they kill you?" Lucas asked, confused.

"I don't know!" He exclaimed, and Lucas jumped at his outburst. Mike squeezed his eyes shut, trying to prevent the tears that he knew were going to fall. "I'm sorry." He whispered.

"You don't have to continue, Mikey." Karen told him, rubbing his arm. He shook his head.

"I do." He said, and wiped his eyes. "They left me on the floor but their boss came in, and he... he had a gun. He put it on my head, right here." He pointed to the spot. "I was waiting for the gunshot, I was terrified, I still am. Nothing happened and I...I opened my eyes and I was in the woods. I don't know how I got there." He finished. El got up off the floor again and this time, sat in Mike's lap and hugged him tightly. He was shocked by it, but hugged her back, burying his face in her hair and he cried into her shoulder.

Mike felt so many different emotions running through him while he explained what happened; fear, sadness, anger, horror, *hate.* He didn't know what else to do other than *cry.* He'd been so terrified to tell them, and here they are, one by one, joining in on the hug and comforting him and being there for him instead of being scared of him or running off to let the lab know where he is. Not that he really thought they would do it, he didn't think they would, but the thought had crossed his mind in the (almost) day he's been home.

"We're going to protect you, Mike, even though I'm pretty sure you can protect yourself now." Dustin tried to joke, but got smacked by Max.

"They're not going to get you, Mike." El whispered in his ear. "They have to go through *me first*."

20. Chapter 18

I probably won't go into too much detail with every characters backstory like I planned to do, because I have so much to write for this story, *Home* and *Collision*, so I apologize in advance for those of you who gave me very detailed backstories, though they will all be mention in one way or another :D

Chicago, the next day

"Are we almost there?" Kali grumbled, stumbling over a tree root. Shawn chuckled.

"You know damn well how far we are, Kali." He told her, grabbing her hand.

"Too damn far."

"We'll be there in ten minutes if you pick up your pace." She glared at him. "So, are you gonna explain to me what all went down while you were gone for two months?" He asked. She sighed and bit her lip, flipping her hair over her shoulder.

"I already told you, I had to train this kid that has two abilities." She told him.

"See, that's where you're *still* lying." He stopped and made her stop with him. She sighed and looked at him. "You won't tell me what those abilities are, which you're gonna do now."

"It's not *that* important, Shawn."

"Not important my ass! It's rare as hell for someone to have *two* abilities, Kali. What are they?"

"Water."

"Okay, that's not so bad. And?" She mumbled something and wouldn't look at him. "What was that?"

"Fire, okay! He can produce *fire*, Shawn." His eyes widened and he

dropped her hand.

"How are you still *alive* then? And you want us to *help* him? Do you have any idea how fucking crazy that sounds?"

"Look, the kid is fifteen, he didn't know a *thing* about his powers, okay? And yes I want to help him! The Projects will find out soon enough and I'm not letting him die over something an idiot did three decades ago!"

"What do you mean he didn't know about them? Why was he in the lab then?"

"Do you remember Jane?" She asked. He nodded.

"You've mentioned her a million times."

"She was an experiment." She said. "Eleven, he calls her El. She escaped around the end of '83 and he ended up finding her in the woods. Look, I don't know everything about her, all I know is what she's told me over the few months I talked to her, and she hasn't gone into much detail, but they're together, have been for over a year. The lab was still after her, and they wanted to use him as bait, but it turns out, he has powers, so he has no use for her now. That's why he was in the lab."

"I feel like you just gave me a bit too much of a backstory there-"

"Shut *up*!" She smacked his arm. "This is serious, Shawn." He put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed them gently.

"Yeah, yeah, I know. Look, when we get to the bunker, you need to explain to everyone where you've been, and what happened. I'll back you up as much as I can, okay?" She sighed and nodded. "Let's go then, get this over with." They walked next to each other for about ten minutes until they heard a loud thunk.

"Oops. I forgot it was right here." She said cheekily. He chuckled and leaned down, grabbing the handle underneath the leaves and pulled it up. He let her go first and she climbed down the ladder, and he followed, making sure the door closed completely. He hopped down the last two feet and they began walking down the long hallway,

their footsteps echoing.

"How do you think they're going to act when they see me?" She asked, biting her lip.

"Well, I'm sure Axel will probably attempt to murder you," He started and she rolled her eyes, "CeCe will either slap you or hug you, or both, and you know John's gonna give you a big ass bear hug." She chuckled. "I don't know about everyone else, but I'm sure they'll be happy you're back." They stopped at the end of the hall and he opened the door, and motioned for her to go in front of him.

"No, you go first." She told him. He raised an eyebrow and shrugged, and went in front of her. They had a ton of stairs to go down.

"We should really invest in an elevator." He said, wiping his forehead as they finally reached the bottom. She rolled her eyes. He opened the door and almost instantly, they heard people talking and laughing. "Hey, stay here for a second okay? I'm gonna kinda ease them into it." She raised an eyebrow but nodded, and stood where no one could see her.

"Hey guys! I'm back!" He called, and she heard footsteps running up to him.

"Where the hell have you been, Shawn?" CeCe asked, crossing her arms and looking up at him.

"Yeah man, you just up and left us yesterday." John added.

"Not cool." Andi glared at him.

"I have been on a very important, and successful mission, of bringing the one and only Kali back!" Kali took that as her cue to walk out, and was immediately attacked with hugs from everyone.

"You have been gone for two months! What the fuck, Kali?" Axel demanded once everything calmed down.

"Let's go to the classroom, guys, I want to tell everyone at once." With many groans and a few curse words, the group of thirteen made their way down the hall and into a classroom with multiple desks. As they

all sat down, Kali stood in the front with Shawn sitting on top of a desk. "Well, first off, the lab caught me."

"Caught you?" Nora asked, an eyebrow raised.

"Yes, they caught me. I'm still not even sure how they did it, but they did. They caught me on December twenty third, and the man running it now, Evans, made a deal with me. I would train the new *experiment* in return for Jane and I's freedom."

"You did it?" John asked, looking at her skeptically.

"I did, and trust me, I did not want to do it. They wanted me to train the boy, Twelve. His actual name is Mike."

"How'd he have a name?"

"Because they just got him in November. He knew nothing about his powers until his fifteenth birthday, when they showed up for the first time. He's Jane's boyfriend." There were a few *what the fuck's* here and there, and she continued, "It's a long story, a really long story, but they've been together officially for over a year. According to him, they took him the morning after her fourteenth birthday, and interrogated him and beat him for information on her. They wanted me to train him, make him stronger, so I did. They promised me freedom, her freedom, and you all would've gotten it too."

"This is crazy, why didn't you contact us? We would have come and got you and him both out." Brittany told her.

"It wasn't that easy, there was something blocking me from contacting you guys. I just tried the other night and it worked, some how, and I was able to talk to Shawn." She replied.

"Well, what kind of power does he have?" Tannern asked.

"Water." Shawn piped up, and she rolled her eyes at him.

"Don't freak out, guys-"

"Water isn't that big a deal." CeCe said, confused.

"He has two different powers." She continued. She bit her lip, "Before I tell you the other one, you have to promise me you won't freak out on me or want to hurt him, okay? He didn't know about it, and can control it."

"Just spit it out already!" Andi exclaimed, throwing her hands in the air.

"He has the ability to produce fire." She said, simply. It was quiet for a minute or two, and Ender burst out laughing.

"Nice one, Kali." She laughed. "Now what's his real power?"

"It's true, he can produce fire. I wouldn't lie about that." She crossed her arms. "We need to get him out of the lab before The Projects find out and-"

"And kill him." Ender said simply, crossing her arms and rolling her eyes. "Do you have any idea how nuts this sounds, Kali? I mean, there is a *reason* that The Projects are after people like him." It's as if that opened the flood gates as everyone began arguing with Kali and each other.

"Everything went down thirty years ago, guys." Shawn spoke up. "Thirty years ago, and it's only happened once. How do we know there hasn't been more people like him? That can produce fire and *control* themselves?"

"We don't know that, and that's the point! If he gets angry enough he could destroy the entire town! Or state!" Axel exclaimed.

"That's bullshit and you know it." Kali rolled her eyes.

"I think we should give it a chance." Mackenzie said, shrugging.

"Every single one of you have been given multiple chances." Shawn said, standing up and walking over to Kali. "After all you've been through, the people you've killed, you've been given a chance. The kid is fifteen, this is completely different from a grown man destroying an entire town."

"He's weak, really weak. If you saw him using his powers, you

wouldn't think that, but he is. We need to help him, just like we've helped each and every one of you. Just give him a chance, okay?" Kali finished, softly. After a few minutes of talking among themselves, completely ignoring Kali and Shawn, Brittany spoke up.

"Fine, we'll help him. But how do you expect us to get him out?" Kali's eyes brightened and she began,

"We need to come up with a plan, and I have a few ideas, but it could take a week or so..." She went on telling them her ideas, a few of them adding to it every once in a while.

21. Chapter 19

Tuesday, March 11, 1986

It's been a little over a week since Mike came home, and he's had to adjust to being back with everyone. He never wanted to be alone for more than an hour or two, and usually, his mom was with him, at least, during the school day until Nancy and Holly got home, and then she'd go to work and the party would come over and continue filling him in on everything he'd missed over the last few months.

The day the party reunited, they stayed for hours, Dustin flipping out over Mike's powers and asking him a million questions, whereas Mike had replied with,

"Dude, I've only known about them for like, two months, for all I know that's all I *can* do."

He didn't go outside much, even now, scared that they would be out looking for him, so he usually just went out at night. The Wednesday after Mike came home, he somehow managed to get El to go home with Hopper after staying at the Wheeler's for two days, *and* convinced her to go to school, which she was pretty iffy about, but did as he told her, he didn't want her to have to be held back due to too many days out of school.

"El broke Troy's nose." Dustin told him the other day. Mike looked at her with a raised eyebrow.

"He was talking crap about you so I may or may not have used my powers and tripped him and he fell on his face." She shrugged. It was the first time he really smiled since he got back, other than when Bryan brought Rosie home.

Today, El was home alone, waiting for Hopper to get back from a call so he could take her to Mike's house. She kept herself busy doing homework, until the phone rang. Groaning, she got up off the couch and went to the kitchen and answered it.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Jane." El's eyes widened, and then narrowed. It was Kali.

"Kali." She hissed.

"Wait, what's wrong? I figured you'd be happy to hear from me."

"I would be, under different circumstances."

"Look, I'm sorry I haven't called in a couple months, I-"

"Oh I know exactly why you haven't."

"But-Wait, what do you mean you know?"

"Mike told me." She said simply.

"He *told* you? How?"

"He's home. But you obviously didn't know that, because you left him to die."

"How the hell did he get home?"

"I don't know, and he doesn't either, but you sure as hell got some explaining to do, and you better start right now."

Kali spent the next twenty minutes explaining her side of the story, how they captured her, how she made a deal with them, how she trained Mike, and how she escaped and planned on coming back for Mike.

"They weren't going to kill him, El, I know that for a fact. They just wanted information."

"They had a gun to his head, Kali, that seems like they were gonna kill him to me. Do you know how terrified he's been since he came home? How much you hurt him? You just left him!"

"I know, and I'm sorry. I didn't want to leave him, but they weakened me, and he isn't strong enough to take on so many people yet."

"Bull. Mike is stronger than you think."

"I...Look, we had a plan to get him out, tomorrow. We were going to leave tonight and I was going to tell you everything that's happened and we were going to get him. Now, we don't have to do that."

"Who's we?"

"Oh, um, I'll uh, I'll explain everything then, Ja-I mean El. There's a lot to talk about. I'll see you tomorrow." She hung up.

"Kali? What the hell!" She exclaimed and slammed the phone down, running a hand through her hair. *Well, I guess today is a good day to tell everyone about our phone calls,* she thought, and plopped back down on the couch, completely ignoring her homework.

When Hopper got home and took her to Mike's, she was strangely quiet during the ride, so he asked,

"What's wrong? I figured you'd be bursting with energy about going to see Mike."

"I need to tell you something." She said, after a few minutes.

"Okay... Go ahead."

"I've talked to Kali." He looked at her, an eyebrow raised.

"Um, you've *talked* to *Kali*? When did *that* happen?"

"About an hour before you got home. She called me. I used to talk to her before Mike was taken." She talked in a low voice, as if scared he would flip out on her. "When you weren't home."

"What the hell, El? Why didn't you tell any of us?" He demanded.

"Because it wasn't that big of a deal then! You didn't like how I went to see her so I know you wouldn't want me talking to her."

"Yeah, because she's dangerous! She wanted you to help kill people, El."

"I know, but she's changed, dad. At least, she had before everything went down with Mike."

"I hope you know you're going to tell him. As soon as we get there, you need to tell him."

"But-"

"No buts, El." She sighed.

"Fine." She crossed her arms.

"What did you talk to her about today?"

"She was going to tell me about Mike, and why I didn't hear from her for two months, I told her I knew, and told her that Mike was home. She said that they had a plan to get him out, tomorrow, and now that he's already out, they're coming anyway."

"Who is *they*?"

"I asked the same thing, and she said she'd explain tomorrow." She ran a hand through her hair. "We're in a mess, aren't we?"

"Yeah, no kidding. I'm serious, you are going to tell Mike as soon as we get there, and I'll be there with you in case anything gets out of hand."

"What's that supposed to mean? Mike wouldn't hurt me."

"I know he wouldn't, not on purpose, but we still don't know what he can actually do, and I don't want him to get mad and freak out on you or anyone else, okay?" She rolled her eyes and nodded. The rest of the ride was quiet, while El kept thinking of ways to bring it up to Mike, but she didn't exactly have to worry about it because Hopper brought it up the second he saw Mike.

"Hey, kid, you mind going down to the basement with me and El? We need to talk about a few things." Mike raised an eyebrow but stood up from his spot between Max and Dustin on the couch.

"Is everything okay, Hop?" Max asked.

"Oh yeah, everything's fine. El just needs to talk to Mike is all." She still looked skeptical and Dustin and Lucas looked like they wanted to

say something, but didn't. Hopper shut the basement door and the three sat at the D and D table.

"What is it? Did something happen?" Mike asked, biting his lip.

"No, not necessarily. El here hasn't been all that truthful with us is all."

"Dad! Stop making it sound worse than it is!" She exclaimed, smacking his arm. Mike looked back and forth between them. She took a breath, and said quietly, "I talked to Kali today." He stared at her for a moment.

"You talked to Kali today." It was a statement. "As in the Kali who left me at the lab."

"Yes. Let me explain, okay?" He crossed his arms, leaning back on his chair. He nodded for her to go on. "I talked to her, way before you were taken, on the phone. It wasn't all the time, and it was just for a few minutes at a time. I didn't think it was a big deal at the time, and then, it wasn't. She called me a little over an hour ago and..." She explained everything Kali had told her. "...they'll be here tomorrow." Mike didn't say anything for a few minutes and finally, he said,

"They? Who's they?"

"I have no idea." She says, honestly. "I wish I knew. I get it if you're mad at me, I totally understand. I-"

"I'm not mad. Pretty annoyed, but not mad. It's just, we've always said that friends don't lie, but you've been lying."

"Not lying, I just didn't tell you. Like I said, it wasn't a big deal then. At least I'm telling you about it now and the phone call I had with her today."

"Look kid, I didn't know anything about this either, until today, if that makes you feel any better." Mike rolled his eyes. "I guess not. I understand if you're angry, but don't blame her."

"I'm not blaming anyone. And I'm *not* mad."

"You sound pretty mad to me." Hopper pointed out. Mike clenched his jaw.

"If you keep telling me I'm mad, then I'll get mad." He said, finally. "I'm mad at Kali, so when I see her tomorrow, I might just *accidentally* let that anger show and either set her on fire, or she'll get doused with water." He shrugged. "Take your pick."

"No fire, please." El said. "She does deserve to get doused in water, I'd say, but that doesn't mean you should do it." He cracked a smile.

"We'll just have to see what happens, won't we?" The father and daughter looked at each other nervously. "Don't get your panties in a twist, the worst I could or would do is douse her with water. I wouldn't actually set her on fire, no matter how bad I want to."

"Alright, ya little badass." Hopper chuckled, leaning over and ruffling Mike's hair. "Keep that confidence up, just don't loose control, got it?"

"Yes sir." Mike nodded.

"I'm gonna go upstairs, explain everything to everyone up there. Come back up when you're ready." He told them, and left them alone. Mike looked at El, who stared at her hands, biting her lip.

"I'm sorry." She mumbled when she noticed him looking at her. He sighed.

"Come here." He told her, standing up. She hesitated but grabbed his outstretched hand. He led her to the couch and plopped down, wrapping an arm around her. "Don't be sorry. I'd probably do the same thing if I was in your shoes."

"I should have told you though, way before now."

"I agree, but it's in the past. Now, like I said, Kali is gonna know I'm mad, and she's gonna have to explain to me why she left to my face, and then I'll consider forgiving her." He said, playing with her fingers. She smiled slightly, and then frowned. "What?"

"You kinda scared me for a minute there." She said, quietly. He raised an eyebrow.

"I scared you? I wouldn't hurt her, El, or anyone. Not on purpose."

"No, I know. I just... the way you were talking... it didn't seem like you. A few months ago, you never would have said something like that. You've changed." He sighed.

"I know, I'm sorry. I guess I changed because of all that's happened." He shrugged.

"I completely understand, Mike." He squeezed her hand gently.

"I want to be *carefree Mike*, just as much as you and everyone else do." He said. "But knowing that they could come after me, or you, or any of us really, at anytime just has me on edge. I'm terrified that something could happen to you guys. I want to laugh, smile, be a teenager, but after everything that's happened, I just can't do it. Not anymore."

"I know." She put her head on his chest and hugged him. "I'm sorry all of this has happened to you, Mike. It's all my fault."

"I've told you once and I'll tell you again, it's *not* your fault. It's not like you asked for all this to happen. And I shouldn't even complain, I know you had it a lot worse than I did. You went through all that for *twelve* years, and I only did for like, four months." She rolled her eyes.

"We *both* have a right complain, together." She stated. He chuckled lightly and kissed her on the forehead.

"Yeah, together."

22. Author's No-Sike! Chapter 20

So...Hi, how are ya?

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Well, it's been a while, eh? Sorry about that, I've had writers block out the ass for all of my stories, so, uh, yeah. Anyhow, I'm so so so sorry for making you guys wait so long for an update, especially considering I have a bit of news.

This story is coming to an end soon- BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE- I will be writing a sequel! I'm not gonna tell you guys when it will be out, because honestly, I don't even know because I haven't even started on the last chapter of THIS story yet. There's one, POSSIBLY, two more chapters of this story left -don't hold me to that I'm still not sure.

You guys will probably hate me for the ending, lol, I know that much XD.

No one dies, so don't worry about that...yet.

Lol I know you guys are probably wanting to like, murder me through the computer/tablet/phone screen but uh, tbh I want to murder myself sometimes because I SUCK SO BAD I'M SORRY.

HA! You guys thought this was just an A/N, huh? In the wise word of THE Finn Wolfhard, WRONG.

ALSO I'M SORRY IT'S SHORT THE NEXT CHAPTER WILL BE LONGER I PROMISE!

I'ma shut up now XD

The next day, when El got home from school, Kali called her again.

This time, Hopper was with her.

"Where is a good place to meet?" Kali asked. El asked Hopper the same question and when he answered, she repeated,

"There's an old junkyard that no one really goes to anymore." She explained where it is and how to get there.

"Okay, we'll be there in an hour." She hung up before El had a chance to say anything.

"She said they'd be there in an hour." She told him. He nodded and stood up.

"Alright, let's go. We need to tell Mike and the others." She nodded and put her shoes on and they left. Twenty minutes later, they arrived at the Wheeler's, and the rest of the Party were already there. When Mike saw El, he immediately went to her and wrapped his arms around her. He was nervous about seeing Kali again. He didn't know if he would be relieved and forgive her for leaving him, he wanted to but didn't at the same time, or if he'd get mad when he sees her and do something he'll regret.

"We're meeting them at the junkyard." Hopper said. "I want to get there before them, so we need to go soon."

"We're going too-" Max started.

"Like hell you are, you four are going to stay here with Nancy and Mrs. Wheeler."

"You can't make us." Lucas said, confidently. Hopper glared at him. Mike sighed and El said,

"They'll just follow us anyways, dad. You know how hardheaded they are."

"You're one to talk." Dustin mumbled and she flicked her wrist and his hat flew off. He started grumbling and went to get his hat while Will snickered.

"I want to go too." Nancy said.

"Yeah, that's a no." Mike spoke up. "Youare *not* going, Nancy. We don't know anything about the people she's got with her, and they could be dangerous."

"So you're letting all your little friends go and not me? That makes no sense!" She exclaimed.

"I don't care. They're gonna be somewhere hiding, and if you're there, we all know damn well that you'll fucking walk out in the open like nothing can hurt you." The siblings stared at each other, neither breaking for a good minute or two, and finally, Nancy gave up.

"Fine, but I swear to God, if you don't come back..." She trailed off and stomped up stairs. Mike just rolled his eyes.

"Drama Queen." He mumbled.

"She's just worried Mike, chill out." Dustin said, then snickered.

"What?" Mike asked, raising an eyebrow.

"You know, it's kinda hard for you to chill out since... You know, *fire*?"

"Oh shut up!" Mike pushed him playfully and Dustin cackled.

"Alright, let's go get this over with." Hopper said and walked out the door without another word. Everyone followed them out, and Karen hugged Mike for about five minutes while he tried to wiggle his way out of her grip.

"Mom, I'll be back, okay? I promise." He said, and she finally let him go. He got in the back with the others, and Will sat in the front with Hopper.

"So like, why is it your nose bleeds when you do the fire shit, but not with water?" Max asked, watching him mess around with a water bottle he found in the back.

"I don't know." He shrugged. He opened it and brought the water out of it, spinning his pointer finger around as everyone watched him.

"Can you do it with soda, too?" Will asked. Mike looked at him and blinked.

"I've... actually never tried." He said.

"You should try when we get back?" El suggested and he nodded, leaning forward and pecking her on the cheek. She gave him a small smile. She was nervous, she hasn't seen Kali face to face in months. No one knows, but Kali has come to Hawkins to see her, but they stayed deep in the woods where no one would find them. It only happened twice, and ended up just sticking to phone calls.

"I'm not gonna set anyone on fire, El, I promise." He told her, squeezing her hand. She snorted at that and nodded, leaning her head on his shoulder. With probably fifteen minutes to spare, they arrived at the junkyard, where Hopper promptly ushered the rest of the party into the old school bus, the one they'd hidden in two other times.

"Hey, Hoppy?" Dustin asked, right before Hopper shut the door. Only he, El, and Mike would be outside the bus. Hopper scowled at him.

"What?" He barked.

"You're not gonna let Kayla or whoever take them, right?" He asked. Hopper's expression softened.

"No, they're not going *anywhere.*" Dustin nodded and walked to the back of the bus with the other three. Hopper shut the door all the way and stat down on a log, on the other side of Mike. El had one arm wrapped around his back, her head on his shoulder, with his arm wrapped around her. Hopper ruffled Mike's hair and Mike gave him a small smile. Everything was quiet, all except for Dustin's giggled coming from the bus every once in a while.

"Mike." The three turned their heads and Dustin's giggles stopped. Standing at the entrance of the woods, was Kali, and three other people. Two boys and a girl. "El."

23. Chapter 21

The story of the Projects is revealed and Mike has a choice to make, Mike makes his choice, which affects everyone.

That IT reference though XD.

Ayee, I said it wouldn't take almost a month, didn't I? I actually did something right for once! Yay! XD

I coulda split this chapter into two and made you guys wait a couple more days for the last chapter but I didn't so you're welcome! XD

Well, this is the last chapter guys! I made it EXTRA long just for that reason! Thank you to everyone who's reviewed, followed and favorited, I love you and appreciate you guys soooo much! I know this story is pretty short, but the sequel will most likely be longer! Chapters and all! I'm not sure at all when it will be out, I'll post an author's note on Home and/or Collision when I figure it out! I do know, is that all new characters will be introduced and we'll be going a little more in depth with them, where they came from and what their abilities are.

Thank you so much for reading!

"Axel, I swear to God if you don't shut the *fuck* up." Mack growled, pushing him away from her.

"But my feet hurt!" He whined.

"Yeah, I know. You've told us at least a hundred times and I'd love for you to keep it to yourself." She scowled at him. He huffed and crossed his arms, walking a bit faster to catch up with Shawn and Kali.

"You two love me, right?"

"Occasionally." Kali replied without looking at him.

"Ouch."

"Let us know what colors you see on him." Shawn told Axel, nudging him. "I think we're almost there." Axel nodded.

Five minutes later, they reached the edge of the woods and could clearly see the junkyard, and the bus Mike, Hopper, and El were sitting in front of.

"Mike." Kali said, loud enough for them to hear. Their heads turned and stared at them. "El." She didn't know if it'd be inappropriate to smile at the sight of them or not. They walked closer as the trio stood up from their seats, and walked towards them.

"He has three." Axel muttered.

"Three? What do you mean three?" Mack asked.

"He's got three different abilities dipshit." She punched him in the arm and he glared at her.

"Chill." Shawn glared at them.

"He doesn't seem mad. His color turned red for a second but now it's a blue-green." Axel told Kali quietly. She nodded. At least he wasn't mad at her.

"Kali." Mike said, stopping only a couple yards in front of her. His arms were crossed.

"What about the other two?" Mack asked him.

"The girl-El, is kinda pissed but the big fucker is confused."

"You look better, Mike." Kali said softly.

"Yeah, well, when you get back home after four months of torture will do that to a person." He shrugged. Axel snorted. Hopper made a face at him. Mike stared at her for a couple seconds, and then looked at El, who still looked pissed, but she had tears in her eyes.

"You've grown." Kali said, finally. El snorted.

"Yeah, dumbass, that's what happens when you get older." She said,

rolling her eyes.

"Attitude too, huh?"

"She gets it from me." Hopper mumbled. Mike snorted but tried to cover it up with a cough. El walked forward and pulled Kali in for a hug. Kali, despite being shocked, hugged her back.

"I didn't expect a hug." She mumbled. "I'm sorry."

"Whatever, it doesn't matter anymore." She released Kali and looked at Mike, who was biting his lip.

"You know, I *was* gonna douse water on you or something, but there isn't a water source anywhere around up here so I can't." He said when he realized she was looking at him.

"I guess I deserve that." He nodded. He took a couple steps forward and held a fist out. She laughed and fist bumped him. He grabbed her wrist and pulled her forward, giving her a quick hug and then letting go just as quickly as he grabbed her. Her eyes widened. "I didn't expect *that*."

"Yeah, me neither. Anyway, who the hell are they?" He asked, nodding towards Mack, Axel, and Shawn.

"Bring out the rest of your little friends first and we'll talk." Shawn said, arms crossed. Mike glared at him but turned to look at the bus, where everyone was looking out a window. El held a hand out and used her powers to open the door. They walked out, sheepish looks on their faces. They made their way over to them. Dustin stayed a little behind Hopper when they reached them, a bit terrified of Kali. "Who are you?" He demanded.

"The kid asked you first." Hopper said, glaring at Shawn, who glared back for a split second, but looked away.

"I'm Shawn, number six."

"I'm assuming you know who I am." Kali said.

"Axel's the name, number nine at your service." He did a little bow

and Kali rolled her eyes.

"Axel?" El asked, confused.

"Yeah, I found another one with the same name." Kali said, giving her a small smile. El just nodded.

"I'm Mack, number five."

"You're all experiments?" Will asked. They nodded.

"What are your powers?" Max asked.

"We told you our names, you tell us ours." Mack stated.

"Damn, it was just a question. Chill out."

"I'll show you chill-" Mack started for her but El stopped her, keeping her in place.

"Calm down, Mack." Axel said, thumping her in the head.

"If I could move, I'd murder you."

"No you wouldn't."

"Wanna bet?"

"Anyways!" Mike exclaimed. "Pretty sure you know me and El, but that's Hopper, her dad, Max, Will, Lucas, and Dustin." He pointed at them.

"Mike." Kali said. He looked at her. "What's your other power?" He raised an eyebrow.

"Uh, water?" He said, confused.

"I mean your third one."

"Third one?"

"Teleportation." Axel said. Mike looked at him weird.

"Uh, pretty sure I'd...know if...I...could...teleport..." He made a face.

"How do you know that, kid?" Hopper asked.

"I can see what powers he has. The colors, basically. Fire, which is fucking deadly and I'm internally freaking out about it, water, and teleportation. Fire is orange, water is obviously blue, and teleportation is purple. I see them all. And telekinisis is a pink-ish red color." He gestured towards El.

"That explains how you got back then." Lucas mumbled.

"How in the hell did you not know you could teleport, dude?" Dustin asked, almost excitedly.

"Just like I knew I could create fire and move water." Mike said sarcastically. Dustin huffed and crossed his arms.

"It was just a question, jeez." Mike ignored him.

"Hey, can we like, go sit down somewhere? My feet are killing me." Axel whined.

"Axel, I swear to God!" Mack pushed him again, as El had released her during Axel's explanation.

"Can you *not*." He glared at her.

"Come on." Hopper motioned for them to follow and he, El and Mike sat back down on the log and everyone else sat in the grass.

"So, you know our names now. What are your powers?" Max asked. Mack rolled her eyes. She didn't like this chick, but then again, she didn't exactly like anyone.

"Cryokinesis." She said lazily.

"What the hell is that?" Lucas asked.

"I can create and or manipulate ice." She replied. "I'm basically Mike's mortal enemy."

"Dramatic ass." Shawn muttered, rolling his eyes. Mike followed suit.

"I'd rather *not* be any one's mortal enemy, thank you very much." She snorted at that.

"You already know mine." Axel said, and Kali nodded in agreement.

"Me too."

"I can sense feelings." Shawn explained. "I can sense pain too, and read minds."

"So you have more than one ability too?" Mike asked. Shawn nodded.

"Yep. It's pretty rare for there to be two abilities, let alone three, but fire? That, my friend, is a big no no to some people." Mike's eyes widened.

"The lab?"

"No, no, well, yeah, kinda." Axel babbled and Kali flicked his forehead.

"Don't freak him out."

"Yeah, it's a bit late for that." Shawn mumbled. "Look, kid, there's more than just the lab. We call them the Projects, and it's ten times the size of any regular lab."

"What's *that* got to do with fire?" Will asked.

"The Projects are determined to kill anyone with the ability to produce fire." He said. "That's why Mack's being a dramatic little asshole about being your mortal enemy or whatever."

"So I have the lab and the Projects after me? Well, that's nice to know." He ran a hand through his hair.

"Can I talk to Mike? Privately?" Kali asked after a few minutes of silence.

"For what?" Hopper asked.

"I just want to talk to him, okay? It's none of your business." She scowled at him.

"It is my business. The kid is like a son to me, and I'll be damned if you do anything to hurt him." He glared at her. Mike, trying to hold back his grin, put a hand on Hopper's shoulder.

"It's fine, Hop. She wouldn't hurt me." Hopper looked at him, and sighed.

"Fine. Ten minutes, max." He said, looking at her pointedly. She nodded and stood up. Mike followed her.

"Shawn, explain to them who the Projects are. I'll explain it to Mike." Shawn nodded. "Is he always like that?"

"He's just really protective." Mike replied. They walked until they were out of sight, in the trees. "What do you want to talk to me about?" He asked when they stopped.

"Well, first off, I'm gonna tell you about the Projects, and *why* they don't want people to have pyrokinesis." He nodded. "Have you ever heard of a town called Derry? It's in Maine." Mike shook his head. "Okay, well, about thirty years ago, there was a man that lived there who had pyrokinesis. All we know is that he couldn't control it, and if he got mad, he'd have these episodes and he'd light a lot of shit on fire and end up killing people. No one knew it was him until about a year or so after he moved to town, and he was caught in the act. The Projects were made right then and there, consisting of most of the people in town and in towns and cities around it. They went after him, and when he figured it out, he was furious, and he lit the *entire* town on fire, killing hundreds of people. See, at first, the Projects weren't going to kill him, they were just going to contain him and run tests on him, and train him for war, but after he lost control, they decided it'd be best to kill him, and anyone else that have the power." Mike stared at her, slowly comprehending what she was telling him.

"So, the Projects are after me now?"

"I don't think they necessarily *know* about you yet. I'm surprised the people at the lab didn't inform them right away, but who knows,

when you escaped they might have." She told him. "Which is why I want you to come with us." He stared at her.

"What?"

"We can keep you safe, Mike." She said. "We have an underground bunker, that *no one* knows exists. There are nine other experiments there now."

"With the same ability as me?" He asked, confused. She shook her head.

"No, we found some of them, like Axel, out on the street, and some we rescued from different labs across the US. Mack was from one in Britain."

"What about El?"

"She stays here." She said simply. "The lab is more worried about you then they are her, and they most likely won't try to find her anymore. She's safe." Mike didn't say anything for a minute or two. "You don't have to decide right now, Mike, I'll give you time to figure it out on your own, but I highly suggest you come with us. I *want* you to come with us. I want you both to be safe. No harm would come to your family if you come with us."

"Is that a threat?" He looked at her.

"No! I'm talking about the lab or the Projects, Mike. They'd kill you *and* your family if they get the chance."

"I can't just leave them, Kali! I promised them I wasn't going to leave again."

"Not all promises can be kept, Mike." She said. He glared at her.

"Yeah, I know. You promised to get me out, then left me. They beat the shit out of me because I didn't know where you were."

"I know, I'm sorry, Mike. I'm *so* sorry. If...If I had known you could teleport, we'd have been out of there the second I started training you." He scoffed. "I'm serious, Mike. I know I did a lot of horrible

things over the last few years, but I've helped save the lives of so many other people, and I want to save more, including yours. So please, please come with us." She was begging him.

"Let me think about it." He walked off, back towards everyone else. She followed behind him quietly, and when they got back, Dustin was talking a mile a minute.

"OhmyGod, ohmyGod, ohmyGod. Mike! Mike!" He exclaimed when he saw him.

"Calm the fuck down, Dustin." Mike said, shaking his head.

"Did you tell them everything?" Kali asked Shawn, who nodded.

"Yep, he sure did, and Axel's dumbass told them Mike needed to come with us like the idiot he is."

"Fuck off, Mack."

"No, you fuck off! You've freaked everyone out!" She exclaimed, smacking his arm. He glared at her.

"Can *I* talk to you?" Hopper asked Kali. "*Alone.*" She nodded and she followed him to the truck, where he leaned against it and lit a cigarette. "Want one?" She shook her head.

"I don't smoke."

"Good." He took a couple puffs and looked at the teens. Dustin was currently flipping his lid, Will was trying to calm him down, Mike and El were sitting next to each other, not speaking, but holding hands, Max and Lucas were talking quietly, and Axel and Mack were wrestling on the ground. "You sure you're not trying to get him in your little gang?" He asked, finally.

"No. I don't have anything to do with that crowd anymore. I left them back in California a year ago. I met Shawn, which is where we got the underground bunker from. Then we started collecting kids and adults who where experiments that escaped." He nodded and took another puff.

"Good. You do understand, that he makes the choice to go with you?" She nodded. "I'm going to talk to him, and try to get him to go, but it's entirely up to him. I want him safe, I want my daughter safe. I want *everyone* safe."

"Of course. I want everyone safe too. We're on the same page, Hopper."

"And, you do understand, that if he chooses to go with you, I *will* be making monthly visits to check in on him?"

"With all due respect, sir-"

"No, don't *with all due respect* me, this isn't up for discussion."

"It's not safe! Not for you or anyone, if anybody sees you, they'll follow you."

"Anybody as in who?" She didn't say anything. "Exactly. Even *you* don't know for sure what you're dealing with. I've had my fair share of encounters with people from the government, from the lab. If I can keep a teenage telekinetic girl a secret from society, I'm pretty sure I can keep the secret of an underground bunker deep in the woods."

"Fine. *If* he decides to come, you will have to wait for me to call and give you a day and time to come. And no one, and I mean *no one* can know what you're doing, understand? Because we don't need a whole group of teenagers coming and messing everything up."

"Of course. I already knew that. I work alone, kid, you oughta know that by now." She snorted.

"Yeah, I do."

"What are the ages?" He asked.

"Twenty-five to fourteen." She replied. "There's only three in their twenties, and Shawn's one of them. He's twenty." Hopper nodded.

Kali looked over towards the group, and Shawn, Axel, and Mack had gone back to the edge of the woods and were talking, and the party were sitting in a close circle, looking deep in conversation. Only a

second after Hopper looked that way, they teens were in a big group hug. "I think he's made his decision."

"Yeah. Let's go." They walked back over to the group, where Dustin used his sleeve to wipe his face as discreetly as possible. Lucas had tear streaks on his face, Max was sniffling, attempting to hide her tears, tears steadily fell from Will's eyes, and El was completely straight faced. Mike's eyes were red, but he wasn't crying.

"Have you decided?" Kali asked. Mike nodded.

"I want-No, I need to go back home and talk to my mom and sisters."

"I understand. We will meet you in the woods behind your house." She said, and walked towards her small group.

"Wait, you know where he leaves?" Dustin asked. She nodded and continued walking.

"What the fuck. How?" Lucas asked, confused. Mike shrugged.

"Well, kid, let's go." Hopper said softly. Mike nodded and stood up, bringing El with him. This time, all six of them sat in the back instead of one of them in the front. Mike didn't even play with the water bottle, he just kept one arm around El's shoulder, his other hand playing with her fingers. It was silent all the way back to the Wheeler's, and when they got there, Hopper sent them all down to the basement so he could talk to Nancy and Karen.

"How bad do you think your mom will take it?" Dustin asked him. Mike shrugged, putting his arms on the table and resting his head there.

"It won't be good, I know that." He said, sighing. He turned his head to look at El, who was sitting on the couch, hugging her knees to her chest, her face buried in her arms. She hasn't said a word to him since he made his decision, and it physically hurt him. He got up and sat next to her. He grabbed her hands gently. "El, come on, please talk to me." Nothing. "I don't want to leave either but-"

"Then why are you leaving?" She asked, suddenly, looking at him, tears in her eyes. "Why are you leaving?"

"Me leaving will protect you, El, you heard them. It'll protect all of you. And I'll be safe."

"You don't know that."

"No, I don't, but I'd rather something happen to me then to all of you." She definitely didn't like that, and promptly got up and ran up the basement stairs.

"What the hell?" Max exclaimed. Mike ran up behind her and followed her all the way upstairs, where she locked herself in the bathroom.

"El! El, come on! Don't be like that!"

"Leave me alone, Mike!" She yelled back. He groaned and tried for a few more minutes, but she wouldn't changer her mind. With a loud groan, he went back downstairs. He started to go back to the basement when he heard his name. He went in the kitchen, where Hopper was talking to his mom and Nancy. Both were red faced, tears running down their faces. It broke his heart.

"Mom...Nancy...I..." He took a breath. "I don't want to leave." He said simply. "But I have to, okay? I know, *I know* that I said that I wasn't going anywhere again but...this is to protect you guys. If I stay here, they'll kill me and you guys, and I don't want anything to happen to you." He saw Kali walk up to the backdoor through the window and went to open it. She walked in, giving them a small smile.

"Hello." She greeted.

"You're gonna make sure he's safe." Nancy said, it was more of a demand than anything else.

"Of course. I want him safe just as much as you three do. I'll do everything in my power to keep him safe."

"It's my choice to go, like you said?" Mike asked her. She nodded. "Then it's my choice to leave, if I want to or need to, right?"

"I'd rather you *not* leave until we're certain your safe, but yes." He nodded. "We should get going soon. You should go pack a bag. We'll

provide you with some more clothes and essentials you'll need." Mike nodded and looked at his mom and Nancy. He had to run upstairs to keep from crying in front of them. As soon as he walked in his room, he shut the door and leaned against it, sliding until he was on the floor. He pulled his legs up to his chest and buried his face in his hands as he sobbed quietly.

God damn it why does this have to happen to me? What did I do to deserve this shit? He thought. *I don't want to leave. I don't want to leave. I don't want to leave.*

He thought that over and over again for the next few minutes, until he finally decided to suck it up and start packing. He emptied his book bag in the corner and started stuffing some clothes in it. He made sure to take the scrapbook El had made him and stick it in one of the outside pockets where it wouldn't get messed up. He got his beanie, his favorite one, the one Hopper got him for Christmas the year before last, and stuck it in his bag. He grabbed a few other things, a notebook and some things for D&D, and finally zipped it up. He threw it over his shoulder and opened the door, only for the entire party, including El, to be standing there, tears running down their faces.

"Guys..." Mike whispered. "I love you guys, so much." He choked out, and Lucas pulled him into a tight hug, dropping his bag in the process. Everyone joined in for a group hug.

"Hey, you're gonna be back. We know you're okay this time. We'll be fine, and you'll be fine, man." Dustin said, patting Mike's back as he sobbed into Lucas' shoulder.

"Yeah, you can work on an insane D and D campaign while you're gone, and when you get back we can play, just like we used to." Will told him. Mike chuckled wetly.

"It's gonna be the greatest one yet, I promise." He said. They finally released him and went downstairs, but El stayed.

"Mike?" She asked softly. He looked at her, wiping his eyes. "I'm sorry I ignored you. I shouldn't have. I'm just really going to miss you." She said, sniffing. "I don't want you to leave. I know you'll be fine with

Kali, but I feel like I'm loosing you all over again." He pulled her in for a hug and hugged her tightly. She cried quietly into his chest and he rubbed her back, burying his face in her hair.

"You won't loose me, not like that. I'll check in with you whenever I can, okay? I'll let you know I'm safe. I *will* be back, okay? I *promise* you I will."

"When, though? When will you be back?"

"Honestly? I'm not sure, El. I probably never will be, but you know what?"

"What?"

"I'll be able to leave whenever I want. And I will, whenever I feel it's safe, I'll be back. I can promise you one thing." She looked up at him. "I'll be by graduation."

"But-"

"I know it's a long way away, El, but... You have to trust me, okay? I promise I will be back *for good* by graduation." She nodded into his chest. They hugged for another minute or two, and finally released each other. Now, Mike had to say goodbye to his mom and sisters. He picked up his bag again and walked hand in hand downstairs, where they were waiting with the rest of the party.

"Mikey!" Holly cried, running to him. He knelt down and hugged her tightly.

"I'll be back, Holly. I know I promised I wasn't leaving again, but it's to keep you safe." He whispered. "I'll be back as soon as possible, okay?"

"I don't want you to go. You just got back!" She sobbed.

"I know, Holly, I know." He rubbed her back. "I'm not saying goodbye to you, you hear me?" He said, pulling away and looking into her eyes. "I'm gonna come back, and I'm gonna be able to take you to school again. I'll be able to protect you like a big brother should, okay?" She nodded. She wiped her face with her sleeves and kissed

him on the cheek.

"I love you, Mikey."

"I love you too." He kissed her forehead and let her go. She went over to El, who hugged her. Mike stood up and face his mom and Nancy, who still looked upset but weren't crying like they were.

"Hey, you two know I'm fine this time, alright?" He said. "I can talk to El, with the connection, and I'll have her let you know how I'm doing." They nodded and surged forward, pulling him into a hug. He hugged them back tightly. "I love you guys. I'll be back as soon as possible, I promise, okay?" He could feel them nodding.

"I love you, baby, so much. Be careful." Karen told him, kissing his forehead. He nodded. She pulled away to try and console Holly, and Mike continued hugging Nancy.

"I'll be okay, and you'll be okay." He whispered to her. "I promise, Nancy."

"I know, Mike, it's just... I'm sorry I used to be suck a bitch to you when we were younger." He shook his head.

"*Don't* worry about that, Nance. All is forgiven, okay. I love you." She leaned back to look at him. He reached up and wiped a tear from her cheek.

"I love you too, Mikey." She hugged him one last time and let him go. He walked over to where Kali was waiting.

"I love you guys." There was a chorus of *I love you too* from everyone in the room. Hopper looked at him.

"Take care of yourself, kid. I'm gonna need you to come back in one piece, you hear me?"

"Yes sir." Mike gave him a smile.

"Will you guys tell the others, everyone who knew I was back that I love them too and I'll be back soon?" Everyone nodded. He nodded, biting his lip. Kali opened the door and stepped out. He went to

follow her, but felt someone grab his shirt. He stopped and turned around, only for El to grab him by the collar of his shirt and pull his face down to meet hers. After a couple seconds, he kissed back and wrapped his arms around her back, and her fingers found their way into his hair. After a couple seconds, she pulled away.

"I love you." She whispered.

"I love you too. I'll be back, I promise." He whispered back. She nodded and let him go. She, and everyone else, watched he and Kali walk to the edge of the woods, where Axel, Shawn, and Mack were waiting. Mike looked back one more time and waved. Everyone waved back and then... they were gone. Completely out of sight. El broke down, sobbing, with only one word on her lips.

"*Promise...*"